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# HOW IT HAPPENS

*Talk about the German People,*

*1914-1933*

*with Erna von Pustau*

PEARL S. BUCK

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## FOREWORD

I HAVE never believed it possible that a whole nation of people could be corrupt and evil. I have lived in enough countries and know enough of peoples to be convinced now that all of us, individually and en masse, run in the same basic patterns. Therefore when one people, the Germans, twice in my own generation undertook a war which spread like forest fire, I found myself curious to know these people better and to find out for myself why they had thought war could be useful to them.

Alas, I knew no Germans—almost none. In China, where I had spent most of the years of my life, I had for knowledge only the memories of the Chinese, repeated to me often, which were that after the Boxer attacks in 1900 the foreign soldiers looted and were cruel, but that of all of them, the Germans were the worst. It became known among the Chinese that the German Kaiser had told his armies to act so ferociously toward the Chinese that they could never forget. They have not forgotten anything.

But later, after the First World War, I knew for myself some German merchants and their families. In those days the Germans had no extraterritorial rights and they had to win their way with the Chinese by being friendly and decent. They managed to do this very well. Where American and English merchants could be haughty and work through compradores and refuse to sit out long and tedious feasts with the heads of Chinese firms, the Germans had to live on equal terms with the Chinese and to accept such invitations and behave as though they enjoyed them. The German wives even went to call on the Chinese wives.

This gave me a new view of German people. But I had no real knowledge of the people of Germany, and so I did not at all understand the Second World War, either.

Unfortunately, I speak no European language fluently. German I do not speak at all. It would do me little good to go to Germany and stare at ruins and look at sullen faces. Therefore I dipped into that wonderful vessel of humanity, our own New York, and found a true German.

I found just the one I wanted, a person intelligent, educated, sensitive to her times. She had spent her whole life in her own country until recently when she came to the United States. She was anti-Nazi, but she thoroughly understood how Nazism had laid its hold on her people. In her own family, which was non-Jewish, Nazism had divided children from parents and sister from sister.

She was kindly willing to satisfy my curiosity. Day after day we met, week after week, I asking, she answering, I listening, she talking. She told her story, which, she said, "is not the whole story, naturally."

We never can really know the truth about anything unless we understand it, not only from our own point of view, but from the point of view of every other people concerned in it. I could not understand the two world wars until I understood them from the German point of view as well as the American, and certainly I could not understand Nazism, unless I also understood it from the point of view of the German people.

There must be many other Americans like me. What I have heard from my German friend—for certainly we became warm friends—I now put down for them.

I put down what I learned not only for some Americans, but for all. As our talk developed, I found myself saying again and again—"But that is the way it is in America, too."

What has happened in one country, to one people, can happen to any other, under like conditions. So I have called this book *How It Happens*.

PEARL S. BUCK

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## HOW IT HAPPENS

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I DID not know Erna von Pustau before we made this book together. I had heard something of how she had been impelled to leave Germany, how she had been arrested by the Nazis in Germany and put into a refugee camp in France, and how finally she had escaped to this country to join her husband. I had seen her only once, but I had been so convinced of the integrity of her being that I had, somewhat to my own surprise, asked her to explain to me how the German people had accepted Nazism. Truthfulness was what I wanted and truth was what shone from her.

When I say shone, I do not mean radiated. Erna von Pustau is not a radiant person. She does not scintillate. But her shining truth is genuine. It glows deeply and steadily. She weighs her words, not only because English is a new tongue for her to speak, but also because she wants to be sure that what she is saying is exactly what she knows and means. She never exaggerates. She strives for the exact balance of the fact in its environment.

To look at her is to believe in her. Hour after hour I have watched her, catching her meaning from her earnest pale face, from her beautiful nervous hands, from the tautness of her slender figure. The marks of childhood malnutrition and of the starvation of the refugee camp are still plain. I have the impression of an active, lively mind, shaped in tragedy but lit with flashes of natural humor and restless with nerves too often tried.

Plain in dress but always neat, her straight brown hair

cut just above her shoulders, her forehead high and smooth, her chin firm, Erna von Pustau has what is called aristocratic blood in her ancestry, and it shows plainly in her person and in her unconscious behavior. She is scrupulously courteous to everyone, and she believes deeply in human equality, but still it shows.

It was a pleasure to talk as long as I liked with someone so honest but also so intelligent and quick to grasp what I needed to know, that I had not to ask many questions. She has a trained mind and a knowledge of history and literature and politics—the latter through experience as well as theory. She saw Nazism begin and grow among a people who did not in the least understand what they were developing. But she understood from the very first. I could not have found a better person to explain Germany to me.

I think I knew this on that first morning we came together to talk. There sat she in the big yellow easy chair on one side of the fireplace, and there sat I in my accustomed place on the blue couch on the other side. The windows were shut against the winter cold and the noise of Lexington Avenue. She smokes cigarettes restlessly, and sips cold water often. I have never persuaded her to any other drink. Later when she came home to the country with me to finish the book, I found that she eats almost nothing, too. Perhaps it is too late to learn to eat after childhood is over. But that first day I saw her only as I have described her.

She waited for me to speak, looking at me with her intelligent gray eyes.

"Let's begin with your family," I said. "I want to know how nearly they are like an American family. But first, please tell me about yourself."

She answered in her modest but very clear voice, "I was born in Germany, in a small town on the Rhine, where my grandmother lived. My earliest memories are with her, for my father was a merchant in China, and I was left with Grandmother, while my mother and elder sisters went to China. They came home in 1908 when I was four years

old, and I then went to live with my family. Really I grew up in Hamburg."

"Show me what you remember in Hamburg, then," I said. I wanted a place in Germany about which to fix my mind.

Her faint half-smile came out. I was to learn that she spoke fluently and easily about events and shyly about personal life. But she went on willingly.

"I remember that I used to think the finest thing in Hamburg was the Alster. The Alster is a big lake in the middle of the city, and walking around the Alster I built my point of view and my approach to the world. It was a good place for thinking and dreaming.

"At the end of the Alster is the city with all the big stores and the banks and the merchant houses and the shipping firms. We lived in Uhlenhorst. That is a middle-class section of Hamburg. The richest section, where the real Hamburgers lived, was on the other side of the Alster. I remember very well when we made our first trip on a ship. There were many little steamers on the Alster. From the deck my mother showed us children the better part of the city and she said, 'Some day we will live there.' It was very important to her."

"Tell me about the street on which you lived," I suggested.

"When we first came to Hamburg we lived at the border of the Uhlenhorst. My father had lost his money and he had to start anew. He was manager of a linoleum business at that time, and his salary was modest. So we could not afford an expensive apartment. But Mother had managed to find a street with small one- and two-family houses with front yards and back yards and good façades, at least. Mother always tried to keep up appearances and the choice of this street was rather characteristic of her. We lived in this street for three years."

"How many were in the family?" I asked.

"We were three sisters. I was the youngest. The second was Lotte—a very temperamental girl. Lotte was the one

who discovered the movie in our neighborhood. Movies were not yet everywhere, and if you remember, the first movies were of dishes—one of the most important things was to break the dishes in the pictures. Lotte insisted on going to the movies, much to the disgust of my mother, because good families didn't go to the movies. Good families went to the theater, to the church, and to the concerts, but never to the movies. My elder sister was Hilde—a pattern of a girl. Well, she was the best in her class, she was always obedient, she never contradicted anybody, and she was a constant example for my sister Lotte and me. Yet how could we like her if we always heard, 'If you would behave as well as Hilde, then I would love you'—this my mother constantly said."

"And you yourself—how would you describe yourself?" I asked.

She laughed gently. "Well, I guess I was not a very nice girl. I was a queer mixture of a dreaming girl and one that constantly thought she was not loved. I thought nobody loved me and that I could do nothing as well as my sisters. My happiest place was a tree in the garden, up which I climbed and in which I dreamed."

"Did your mother mind having no sons?" I asked.

"My mother minded it very much," she replied seriously, "and I was really the greatest disillusion, because I was the youngest one and my mother thought I, at least, would be a boy."

"Did German women very much want sons?" I asked.

"It was not only a question of what the women wanted. It was really that the woman who gave a son to the man was more highly esteemed than the one who gave him only daughters."

"Did your father feel the same?"

"Well, my father was sorry. When I was born and he heard that I was a girl, he resignedly said, 'Nevertheless she will be welcome.' But he really never could get over it. And I remember when I was older he once told me, 'I would have taken more thought for my position and my

business and everything if I had had a son who could take over.' It was considered natural that a son would take over the business of the father."

"And it was not possible for the girl to take charge?"

"No, that was out of the question. But there was one woman I knew as a child who had a business and managed it, and that was my grandmother, my mother's mother. My grandmother, after the death of her husband, managed for herself a textile factory. It would have been queer as long as her husband lived for her to have managed the factory, but as she did it after he was dead, it was considered very gracious of her, and she really was respected, even by the working people."

"Did she have any sons?"

"My grandmother had two sons. Only the elder son was supposed to take over the factory, so the younger son emigrated to South America. The elder son managed the factory with her, but she was very dominant and she didn't like to give him the whole control. Besides, this son had married a Catholic woman."

"And your family was Protestant?"

"My family was Protestant. Now the Protestants in the Rhineland are a minority, because the Rhineland is Catholic, there. The Protestants used to like Jewish people more than they liked Catholics."

"My grandmother, like many of the Protestant people in the Rhineland, was from French Huguenot stock, who had emigrated from France to escape from the Catholic persecution. So the hatred against the Catholics was in their tradition. My grandmother, working with her son every day in the factory, never allowed his wife to enter her house, nor wanted to see her. She didn't go to his wedding, either. She just ignored her son's wife and she didn't want to give over the factory to her son because, she said, you never could know what a Catholic woman would do."

"Let me see how your grandmother looked," I begged. I could see that Erna von Pustau still felt warmly toward her grandmother.

"Grandmother was, I would say, middle-sized, and very rotund. That was a pity because she never could take me on her lap."

"Her face?" I suggested.

"She had a very round nose. She wore eyeglasses and always when she looked at me she moved her eyeglasses on the top of her nose and looked at me over her glasses. Her hair was black. Her eyes were blue. My mother had the same black hair and blue eyes. And Grandmother liked—indeed, she loved to eat good things and to drink good wines."

"Were you afraid of her?"

"No, but I had some kind of awe. She was so much respected and important."

"She lived in her own house?"

"Yes. The ground floor was rented and she had the first and second floors. The next house belonged to her, too. And one of my first memories is that I went with my nurse collecting rent. And I noticed very soon that I was more respected than my nurse, because I 'belonged to Grandmother,' too. So when we collected rents I got some candies always from every family, and people told me, 'Well, give your grandmother my love.'

"Sometimes my nurse went to the factory to see my grandmother and she took me along with her. And I respected my grandmother because she sat on a high chair which looked terribly important. This chair was so high that her feet were a lot above the floor."

"Where was this chair?" I asked. The portrait was growing complete.

"It was before a desk, and on the desk was a big book. And Grandmother wore such white cuffs over her sleeves and that, too, looked terribly important. And there, in the same room, was my uncle, whom I learned to know only there, because he never came to our house. And above the desk of my grandmother was a little window, and through this window she could look into the machine room, and she watched to see whether everybody was working.

“And twice my nurse took me along with a basket full of good things to eat for women workers who were sick. And she always told me, ‘Oh, Grandmother has such a good heart.’ And this picture I have always before my eyes when my mother said, ‘Oh, I want the good old times to come back.’ But she never said for whom the times were good.”

“Was your grandmother talkative, or quiet, or jolly?” I asked.

“She was talkative. All Rhenish people are, more or less. She had quite a temper, which you can see in the fact that she didn’t allow her Catholic daughter-in-law to come to her. And she didn’t like my father.”

“Why not?” I asked.

Erna laughed. “Well, when my mother married this man, my father, he had come from China for a very short time, and only to look for a wife. And he was in a hurry. So after he had decided that my mother would be a good wife for him, he didn’t make any courtship. He didn’t present himself at the house. He only sent a wire from Bremen asking if he could come and ask for the hand of this girl. He had seen my mother at a party in Bremen, at the home of a school friend of my mother, and he fell in love with her. My grandmother didn’t know what to make of this man who came from China. What was China? Her daughter going to China? She didn’t like it. She should stay at home and not go where foreigners are.”

“How did your mother feel about the young man?” I asked.

“My mother had seen him only once at this dancing party. But the idea of going to China, of seeing the world, and all that, really appealed very much to her. And his name—” Erna von Pustau looked mildly embarrassed. “My mother had a terrible name which I really can’t repeat aloud—it applies to a certain part of our body—”

“How did she happen to have such a name?” I asked.

“My grandfather’s family came from Switzerland. You see, ‘German blood’ comes from many countries. For the



Swiss, this name only means that you lived not in the mountains, but in the lower parts. But translated into real German, it applied to a very queer part of our body. But this young man had a good name with a 'von' which was, for a small-town daughter of a purely bourgeois family, the most wished-for thing in the world. Noblesse—well, if a bourgeois girl could marry into the noblesse, even if only the 'von' remained of the old glory, the name still sounded good. So, my mother was very proud to marry him.

"By the way, I really ought to tell you a little story which happened when I was about fourteen or fifteen years old. It is a bit shocking, yet still it is a good story to make you see this funny adoration for the noblesse. Well, Sunday afternoons, between two and four o'clock, was the official visiting time in the good Hamburg families, a formal and holy time. And my father liked to have a little nap after lunch. One Sunday, after his nap, he was just getting up but was still in his drawers, not yet dressed. It was three o'clock and the doorbell rang and my father opened the house door just as he was. It was no visitor; it was, fortunately, only somebody who wanted to sell some honey. But Mother came running. In fact, we all came running, and Mother exclaimed, 'Paul, Paul, how dare you! Opening the house door, on Sunday, at this time—and in drawers!' My father only looked at her and said, 'My dear Louise, I am a Von Pustau, even in drawers!' I could see that my mother felt really hurt."

"And was your mother then silent?"

"She was absolutely silent, and she really thought that my father had a right to say what he had said."

"Well, Mother insisted on marrying this Mr. 'Von.' But my grandmother always thought him an adventurer and she never could get used to him. He liked to talk but he didn't like to listen if other people talked too much. He didn't care what he ate, while in the Rhineland eating was a very important thing and the family dinner on Sunday usually took at least two hours—a way my father hated.

"Another very important thing—my grandmother and

my mother were for the Kaiser. My father hated the Kaiser."

"Why? Where had he learned to hate the Kaiser?"

"Oh, he learned it very early, indeed. It began when the Kaiser had dismissed Bismarck. My father was a Bismarckian. For those times I would say my father was a progressive liberal. That sounds queer to you—who perhaps think that to be a Bismarckian was to be a reactionary. But Bismarck, although he had founded the Kaiserreich under the Hohenzollern dynasty, had created a united German nation which before him was but a loose federation of states. It is true, he did not establish a German republic, for which the bourgeoisie had fought in vain in the 1848 revolution, but he did unite Germany and he did abolish the customs between the German states—a very important and progressive thing for the German businessman.

"I remember one Sunday my father took his family to Bismarck's grave, which is near Hamburg. At the grave he was very silent and his face was tense as I had never seen it before. On the way back home he told us of that time when the Kaiser dismissed Bismarck. He himself had belonged to a group of young people who had addressed letters to Bismarck urging him to fight the Kaiser. My father never really could understand why Bismarck refused to fight. When, many years later, I challenged him on this point, saying that although Bismarck loved his country he was more devoted to the dynasty than to the people, Father said in quite a bewildered way, 'That could be—yes, that could be.' And he used to call Bismarck the only diplomat Germany ever had because he knew when to stop a war and when to make a peace which would not embitter the enemy more than was absolutely necessary.

"Second, Father hated the Kaiser because of his China policy. My father had been a merchant in China for many years, and he thought that the only way for the Germans to find a better chance in the foreign market, especially in the Asiatic markets, was to make the enemies of England the friends of Germany. Now, at the time of the Boxer Re-

bellion Father thought that Germany ought to be strictly neutral so that the Chinese would see that the German merchants were really better friends to them than the English were and would turn to the Germans for business. The Kaiser did the opposite. He took sides with the British.

"My mother and my grandmother were pro-Kaiser. With my grandmother it was very conscious, it belonged to the order of things. In her home, in her business, she was master, but she had to have somebody above her. This was the Kaiser, and above the Kaiser was only God.

"For my mother it was more that this was the traditional way, and she did not think much about it. She had a natural tendency to look always to those who were above her and to long to be there, too.

"My attitude to the Kaiser was—well, he was very superior. And Grandmother said, 'He is a good man and we have to be obedient,' and in the school we had a holiday when the Kaiser had a birthday and we sang beautiful songs about the Kaiser. But my father didn't like him. So, as I loved my father very much, and much more than my mother, I was inclined to take my devotion to the Kaiser rather lightly.

"And I ought to tell how the Kaiser came to Hamburg. I had behaved very badly. The lady in the first floor of the house we lived in had died. My mother had taken us children to take leave from the dead. And I had been terribly afraid to see the dead, or 'the death,' as I called it. But my mother had insisted. Before we had to go down, she had practiced with us how to curtsy with flowers in our hands. Every one of our children had flowers in our hands. And we went down, and Mother, when she rang the bell, had a serious mien. The door was opened and we were led into the room of the dead. There, unintentionally, I laughed! I laughed a terrible nervous laugh, and my mother slapped me and pulled my hand. No one could even put the flowers down. With our flowers we had to go upstairs again—and how my mother slapped my face! I had disgraced the fam-

ily. 'You have to go in your room and not come out again,' she told me.

"I ate all meals in my room. No one was allowed to speak to me, and only my father came in in the evening to say good night. I went to school and that was the only time I could go out of my room. This went on for more than two weeks.

"And then the Kaiser came. The whole family was invited to visit friends who lived on a street where the Kaiser was going to pass and, as the whole family was invited, I had to go too. We got new dresses, and my mother had to speak with me, and so, on the day the Kaiser came, I was allowed to join the family for the first time. Now for me, it was the Kaiser who had liberated me, and I thought, 'Well, Father can say what he wants, but the authority of the Kaiser is the greatest thing in the world.' I was then nine years old.

"I remember that I had never before seen such a crowd on the streets. All Hamburg seemed to go to the street where the Kaiser was passing. After that I really was devoted to the Kaiser much more than I was before."

"Were you then still living in the poorer part of town?" I asked.

"Yes. But we moved when my father got another job. A friend of my father's came from China, and he spoke with the director of a shipping firm who wanted to build a new department for the trade with Eastern Asia and my father, recommended by this friend, was made the head of this department. He got a much better salary than he had before and besides this he was supposed to get a certain per cent of the business of this department. We moved to the new apartment in the heart of the good district in April, 1914."

"Tell me how your father looked," I now asked. It was quite plain from the expressive face opposite that Erna von Pustau had been loved by her father.

"My father, was tall and slender. All his life he was slender. For me, he looked like a gentleman. He played tennis well, he was a good dancer, he was a good swimmer,

He was a good rider. He kept himself very straight. He had his long-drawn jaw which I have, too, and blue eyes and very fine blond hair, always short cut."

"Cheerful in the home?" I suggested.

"He was—how can I describe it shortly?—he was extreme. He could often be nice and understanding and generous, and he could be of a terribly quick temper. To get a slap on the face from him was easy and happened very often. But he was straightforward. When he punished us he made it short and hard, but then it was over, and he did not do as my mother used to do, not speak to us for days, or make remarks, small remarks that hurt. But we could never rely on Father, because we never knew when his bad temper would come. He was really very autocratic."

I pressed her a little. "What was the reason for this suddenness of temper? Was it inherited? Could you say Germans are typically so extreme?"

"I certainly can say that my father's family was that way," she replied. "In all of them, and there were eleven of them, the strongest fault was sarcasm. It was really a kind of self-defense. I, being not so quick-witted as my sister Lotte, who could reply sarcastically, suffered very much under it. But there was more—my father could beat us."

"Did your mother do this, too?" I asked.

"No, never Mother. Besides that one slap in the face, on the occasion of which I told you, Mother never slapped. But when Mother had been angry at us, and my father came home from his work, Mother would say, 'This or this of my daughters needs a beating.' Then she would close herself in her room, because she couldn't stand it, and my father had to give the beating, usually only with his hand. But we had a whip with twelve leather strings bound together. That hung constantly in our playroom for us to look at and be reminded that we must be obedient children."

"Would you say that your childhood was made unhappy by these things, or did you still have good times?" I asked.

"I felt my childhood really unhappy because of my

mother. I didn't feel myself loved by her, and I was constantly reminded by her that I was a good-for-nothing and too excitable."

"Did your father not protest when your mother would not speak to you for so long?" I asked.

"My father would never have protested to Mother before his children, although I knew from his attitude that he didn't like it, because he always came to see me. Sometimes he had a little candy for me—a thing that made me think he was secretly on my side. But he never would have shown it openly. You see, my mother in the house was absolutely the dominant one. I don't know how the marriage between my parents was at the beginning, but later and especially after my father had lost his fortune, it certainly wasn't so good that I could say that it gave us children cheerfulness. Still, they always behaved well toward one another."

"But you suspected or felt them unhappy?"

"No, it was more than suspecting. For example, Mother felt terribly unhappy after Father had lost his money. She thought she had the right to a better life and she said so quite openly. But she had her dowry, and from the interest of her dowry she paid not only the maid but all the many things which my father called ridiculous luxury. One of these things was that we children had to go to an expensive private school—not to the ordinary public school. And we had to have piano lessons and fancy dancing lessons. And there was a constant struggle about all these things and my mother—well, her tears were easy to come. My father hated tears. And with all the sarcasm he could muster, he would say, when Mother had tears in her eyes, 'Well, it seems to me that the soup is too much salted again.' Or, he would just simply throw his napkin on the table and pace the floor or he would go out and drink a glass of beer somewhere and come back when he had calmed down.

"But I really think I was my father's favorite daughter from the very beginning. So he made good something in my life which my mother certainly made bad. Yet his sar-

casm spoiled much of it. I can't say if his attitude is typically German. I think it was typical for his family and it was somehow typically north German. The south German and Rhenish people are different. The spirit in my father's family was quite contrary to that in Mother's family. Mother's family was very close but not Father's. For example, Father had a brother some years older than he, and when we moved to Hamburg this brother came to visit us. Father had the day before opened a bottle of wine and had taken a drink from it, and when his brother came for dinner, he said, 'Well, we have this bottle and there is only a bit out. We can use it.' The brother stood up from the table and said, 'This is a scandal that you begrudge even a bottle of wine.' He took his coat and his hat and was never seen again. And the next time Father knew of him was at his burial, which happened seven years later. Although they lived in the same town, this bottle of wine was enough so that they would never meet each other again. That was the spirit in my father's family."

"Did your father's family all live in Hamburg?" I asked.

"No, only this one brother. Another brother lived in the country. He had married a very rich woman and he had a big estate with race horses, and the whole family went to visit him. Once we went there for an Easter Sunday and Father insisted that he get three eggs for breakfast because, he said, 'This brother will never give me enough to eat; he is too stingy.' So he had a tremendous breakfast before we went.

"I remember this brother very well because there I heard for the first time the word 'reactionary.' Father, having seen the growing auto industry in England and in America, had invested his money in an automobile factory, and he thought it was a very good investment, and, as he said, he wanted to 'put Germany on wheels.'

"Now we were at the table with his family, and I heard my uncle say, 'Well, well, I hear you put your money in an auto factory. It is your own business. But I wouldn't have done it.' Father said, 'Why not? I think that in sev-

eral years autos will be the new means for communication.' Uncle said, 'Not in the country, not in the country! I won't have autos in the country. We had one right here in our neighborhood. And we had a driver from the city. What did he do? He spoke with our farm hands. He told our farm hands not to be so humble, to have fewer working hours and higher wages. No, those are modern things. We don't want them here.'

"On the way home Father said to Mother, 'I didn't think that my brother really had become so reactionary, siding so much with the Junkers.' I said, 'What is that?' and Father said, 'That's just what your uncle is.' So for me the word 'reactionary' for many years was tied up with the picture of this uncle who was against autos, with his big estate and his race horses."

I felt now that I knew the German father. "How did your mother look?" I asked next.

"Mother was a beauty. Everybody said so. She had heavy black hair, a shiny black, and not straight, as I have, but wavy and very long. She had deep blue eyes, a straight profile and very full lips, absolutely white skin, and her cheeks were always red. She was tall and slender and very straight. She was very conscious of her beauty. My first idea of Mother was from a big oil painting of her in my grandmother's house. When my nurse told me the fairy tale of Snow White, she always said, 'Snow White looked just like your mother,' and showed me this picture. I admired her beauty and it made me so much more unhappy that she didn't love me."

"When did you begin to think she didn't love you?" I asked gently.

"From the very first. It began with silly things. You know I lived with Grandmother. I first saw Mother when they came back from China. Grandmother always had my nurse make me curls. Mother immediately insisted on my hair being in braids. I didn't like that. Then, Grandmother paid more attention, naturally, to my mother than to me. It was a terrible loss for me. Then came the first



time Father gave me a beating, and my mother went in her room and had Father give me the beating. Father then closed me in the coal cellar. It was terribly frightening for me, and when I came out of it—for hours I must have been really sick. I still remember our maid sitting there and making me cold compresses on my forehead, and Mother came and wanted to kiss me, and I refused to kiss her, and she said, 'Why don't you love me?' And this question at this moment—'Why don't you love me?'—made me, for my part, first aware that I didn't love her. And then very soon she began bringing up the other sisters as examples, how good they were and how bad I behaved. And out of these little symptoms—maybe I wasn't right—my reaction as a child was, 'I am not wanted here—she doesn't love me.' I didn't love her, either."

"You loved your sisters?" I asked.

"My relation to my sisters was very complex because they had been in China, and I hadn't. That was the first thing that really separated us very much. I could have been closer to Hilde, my elder sister, if Mother hadn't always picked her as an example of how the others should behave. Still, she was very nice to me and she always protected me against my sister Lotte. Lotte had a temper, too. Then my two sisters were the beauties and I was from the very beginning, in the eyes of my mother, the ugly girl. I hadn't hair like Hilde. I wasn't quick-witted as Lotte.

"If I wanted to tell Lotte my fairy tales, she always began to speak of China. But I admired her very much because she was so courageous. I was afraid of everything. Lotte wasn't afraid of anything. She even contradicted Father and Mother, and I admired her tremendously. She knew that and she misused it terribly. We were close in a kind of a contradictory way. Somehow, we couldn't get along without one another. But Hilde was very silent, and we could forget her for months."

"And how was the new home?" I asked.

"The new home was the ground floor in an apartment house—seven rooms on the ground floor, the kitchen and

maid's room, and the big cellar in the basement, a small front garden and a big back garden with a lawn and trees. And for the first time we had running hot water. That was really a miracle.

"The only person who didn't like this apartment was our maid, Berthe. Berthe was used to coming through the same entrance as we in our other house, but this house had an entrance for '*Herrschaften*' and another entrance for the servants and the delivery boys. And Berthe didn't like that. Berthe had been with us for seven years and Mother gave her the keys and said, 'It's all right with me, you use our entrance.' But this house had a janitor, and he protested that it was a disgrace for the house if the maid went through the good entrance. My mother gave in and Berthe had to go to the servants' entrance.

"But we others were very happy with this new apartment since it was much bigger than the other one, and it had the beautiful garden, and it was only seven minutes from the school."

"Tell me about your school." I said.

"It was a private school for girls with only women teachers.

"At first we had a difficult situation. We didn't speak Hamburg German and so we were considered 'foreigners' and we were laughed at for our 'silly' pronunciation of the German language. Then this school did not correspond to our standard of living. It was a school for people wealthier than we were. Most of the girls had their own houses. Mother never allowed us to invite friends to the old apartment because she was ashamed of it but when we moved to the new apartment she allowed us to invite our friends."

"Was the class distinction so very strong in all German life?" I asked.

"I think that Mother made us aware of it even more than the girls at school did."

"Would you say that the economic classes in Germany were everywhere severely separated?" I asked.

"There was an enormous class distinction everywhere.

Money was basic, and we never met lower-class people. Where could you meet them? They lived in other districts. The only one I knew was the maid in the house. Working people didn't come to our schools, or to our church. I had a vague memory from Grandmother's days that there were such things as workers, but I never met them. I never thought about them. They just didn't exist. On the other hand, the well-to-do and wealthy families didn't come together, either. This, too, was really a very strict separation."

"Could people pass from one class to another? If a well-to-do person became rich, could he pass into the wealthy class, or did birth matter, too?" I asked.

She replied in her careful fashion. "Well, I can tell that only out of personal experience and, as a very good example, from my father, that you can come up and down. My father came from a very wealthy family, but his father lost his money, so they sank down. My father earned a fortune in China, so he was rich again and accepted in the wealthy circles. Then he lost his money with the auto business and he was down again. But—and that is the difference from many other people—Father's family name was a good name in Hamburg and so he still kept some wealthy friends."

"Suppose a worker was brilliant and did very well, could he rise into the well-to-do or wealthy class?"

"I never met one at that time, and I don't know if it could happen to one out of ten million," she answered.

"Were you and your sisters reared with the idea of a profession, or just marriage?" I asked next.

"We were too young to speak about marriage at that time," she said. "But the whole trend of Mother's education was to have us married and there was no idea whatsoever of our ever being independent, or earning money. It never entered her mind. Father sometimes said it, and it sounded like a joke, and he said it because of the luxury of the school and all those other things—'The girls will have to earn their livings later on, and they can't do it

with this kind of education,' but it certainly sounded like a joke to every one of us, including Mother."

"Did all the well-to-do and wealthy people rear their daughters for marriage, primarily, and not for professions?" I asked.

"I found no exception to the rule," she said.

"How old were you when the First World War began?" I asked next.

"I was almost eleven years old."

"Was your family conscious of a war coming?"

She made an arresting gesture of the hand. "Will you allow me, before we speak of that, to speak of our Jewish friends? As I told you, Mother came from the Rhineland, where the Jews were considered better people than the Catholics by the Protestant minority. Mother had a Jewish girl friend who had married a Hamburger, and she was, indeed, for many years our only family friend—the only family with which we had close contact. We were very often together, and I remember when Mother first told Father that she had met this school friend again and that she had invited her, he said, 'You are going to invite Jewish people to our house?' Mother said, 'Why not?' Father said, 'Why, I have nothing against Jewish people, but you don't meet them socially.' Mother said, 'That's ridiculous. She was my best school friend. I don't see any reason why I shouldn't invite her.' Father said, 'Well, if you want to do it, then do it.'

"But this was the first time that I was aware of the existence of Jewish people and that they were something else from ourselves. I asked Father, 'What is Jewish people?' I knew Jewish people only from the Bible, and I thought, 'Well, it is funny for them to live here. They ought to have lived in Palestine centuries ago, a thousand years ago. Why are they here? It is as strange as if the old Romans were still living among us.' Father said, 'They have black hair.' And I said, 'Well, Mother has black hair, too.' He said, 'Well, they have brown eyes.' And I considered—'Well, Mother has blue eyes, and they have brown eyes.'

"I was very curious about these Jewish people coming. When they came, the school friend of Mother had much more than Mother the Rhenish way of speaking. It is a kind of singing way of speaking, this Rhenish dialect, and she had the same temper, and the same humor at dinner, and she loved to eat as well as my grandmother did. The daughter of this family became, in fact, my first real friend and remained my friend for many years.

"Father soon went along very well with the Holzmanns, especially with Mrs. Holzmann, who was a beautiful and gay woman.

"That was all I heard about 'the Jews' being something different from us, at that time. No, I remember after we had moved into the new apartment I had another experience. Our neighbor family had a girl of about my age and I made friends with her and used to play in the garden together with her. One day my friend Edith Holzmann came visiting me and we three played in the garden and it was a very gay afternoon. Next day, this neighbor girl came and said: 'My mother says that as long as I play alone with you, it is all right, but I am not allowed to come when your Jewish friend is there.' I said: 'If you aren't allowed to play with a friend of mine, then I won't play with you, either.' And we did not play together for weeks since I insisted that she be disobedient to her mother.

"I spoke with my mother about it. I said, 'Mother, our neighbor is crazy. She doesn't allow her daughter to play with me when Edith is there.' Mother said, 'That's not a very nice attitude.' And I said, 'Couldn't you go over and tell her?' Mother didn't like to do that. She said, 'Don't bother about it. Just go on playing with your new friend. Her mother may get more reasonable and let her daughter come over even if Edith visits.'

"I found Mother's attitude very illogical and I thought she had no principle. So, as I told you, I didn't play with my new friend for weeks and I was very lonely. Edith lived rather far away in quite another district of Hamburg and

I couldn't see her much. One day, I was just too long alone and so I began to play with our neighbor girl again. This was the only anti-Semitic experience I met before the beginning of the war."

“JULY-August, 1914! It was the beginning of the First World War and the end of a period which later we were to call the ‘good old times.’

“Let’s come back to your question of whether our family was conscious of a war coming. In my memory, the possibility of war as something that might really happen to us began with the discussions about the murder of the Austrian Archduke.”

“Didn’t you hear anything of it before that? Did you not know that Germany was arming, for example?” Thus I interrupted her.

“Armed, we were, naturally. So were all European nations. But not in the sense that we were arming for an imminent war,” she said.

“Your family didn’t expect that there would be war?” I persisted. I could see she was searching her memory.

“Well, we had, as all European countries have, a compulsory military service. Father had served at his time, so had most German fathers. And we knew, naturally, that we had had wars. And we knew that the French were our enemies. That we learned at school in the history lessons, and that was what Mother said. Father was of the opinion that England was our real enemy. He was always convinced that England was afraid of our growing competition on the world market. He felt certain that behind the Russians and the French the dynamic power was always England. Most of the Hamburger merchants, by the way, shared this opinion.

"I don't know whether the grownups had spoken of war before—I mean of an imminent war, one that would happen in our time. You know, we children mostly heard of all these things at mealtimes. Immediately after the Archduke of Austria had been murdered Father said, 'That can mean war!' Mother said, 'Ridiculous, you are crazy!' Father said, 'I don't know—I don't know! They are just waiting for an occasion.' "

"Who were 'they'?" I asked.

" 'They' were always the others."

"Not Germans?"

"No, certainly not."

"Your father didn't think the Germans wanted war?"

"No! It was his opinion that Bismarck had fixed our borders as far as we wanted them, that we had no cause for aggression, that the others had every cause for aggression. And that was what he said.

"A queer thing was that although the talk about an imminent war began with the Austrian Archduke who was murdered by the Serbs, the grownups hardly spoke about the Serbs but mostly about a war with Russia and France and England. At school, however, Miss Ritter, our principal, made a very sentimental speech about bad Serbs who had killed the 'poor, poor Austrian Archduke' and that the 'poor, poor Austrian Kaiser' had lost another member of his family. She was so touched by her own speech that tears were running down her cheeks. But there was no mention of war in the school. We had a day of sorrow free for the mourning of the killed Archduke. We didn't mourn it, but we did play very well.

Then came our vacation time and we wanted to go on vacation. Having now a much better income and a better position, Mother wanted to return to the Rhineland and see her family. Father didn't want to go. He said that times were really too insecure to make such a long trip. Mother strongly suspected that Father didn't want to go to the Rhineland because he was not on good terms with his mother-in-law and that all his talks about war



and insecure times were only excuses for not making this trip.

"Well, we made the trip, because Mother was the dominant one. We made the trip to Seven Mountains, at the eastern border of the Rhine. Grandmother was supposed to meet us there next day. She didn't come. Instead, as I grasped from the talk between Father and Mother, she had written a letter saying that Mother was crazy to make the trip now. Mother said, 'I don't know what's the matter with Grandmother, that she always gets excited.'

"The hotel was filled with people from the Rhineland. During the first days they were as gay as ever. They drank their wine and they sang their songs, and I remember this little song—'Drink, drink, little brother, drink! Leave all your worries at home.' That they sang in the evenings. In the mornings, however, they hurried for the newspapers and they looked at the news, and they said, 'Well, telegrams are being sent from one country to another—can there be a war?' The current opinion, was, however, 'no.' "

"Nobody wanted war?" I repeated.

"Wanted? A strange question for that time! Why should we have wanted war? There was no reason at all for that. People were upset or frightened or simply refused to believe that war could come. People didn't ask, 'Do we want war?' nor were they asked whether they wanted it or not. You see that would have put the question much too personally. War was something that would affect every single person, yet no one felt he could do anything against it. It was just 'fate,' if you understand what I mean. People said, 'Well, the French won't dare. They were beaten the last time and they know they will be beaten again!' And as France is the closest to the Rhineland, they didn't consider countries that were at a far greater distance from their little province. Father made himself a very unloved fellow by mentioning that thanks to the Kaiser's stupid policy, Russia would probably join France. Russia was really too far away from the Rhinelanders to consider that, even. Well, what had they to do with the Russians? And when

Father even mentioned that the British might join, they thought him absolutely crazy, and only one of the silly northern Germans. We children sometimes listened to the talk but on the whole we found other things much more interesting. We went by ourselves in the mountains, or we played around, and though we couldn't help listening at mealtimes, we really didn't think very much of war.

"Then Grandmother came. Grandmother got out of the train. It wasn't too easy to go down the steps because she was so rotund, but when she was on firm ground she immediately said, 'Why, Louise'—Louise was Mother's name—'you are still here! I insist that you go home this evening. Don't you know that the Kaiser can order mobilization any day now?' The word 'mobilization' had a strange effect on all of us. Mother got very white in the face. Father looked aside, and I was worried to death because I didn't know that word. It was a strange word and a strange thing. I didn't like it.

"Well, Mother began to cry, and Grandmother began to cry. Father said, 'Don't cry here in the station. Save it until you are in your rooms.'

"The grownups went on and the children followed. And I asked my sisters, 'What is mobilization?' and they didn't know, either. I was very upset, and for the first time I didn't know what was the matter with Grandmother. Then Grandmother brought herself to order and she came out on the big terrace of the hotel. It was early in the evening and the guests were out for their walks and I asked if I could stay with Grandmother, and Mother allowed this on the condition that I wouldn't say one word. I promised so I was allowed to sit at a table with them, and now I learned that Grandmother had experienced already a war—the German-French war of 1870. A person who had seen a war! How exciting! But she wasn't excited—she was very uncomfortable about it. She told how the mobilization had come and how her father had had to go to the war and how her mother had worried and had managed the business of her father. She managed the household—

she was the eldest and cared for her other sister. And they always prayed that God would give Germany the victory and lead their father back to them.

"Mother said, 'But we won the war that time, didn't we?' Grandmother wasn't impressed by that. She only said, 'War is a terrible thing.' She had retired from her factory, feeling too old, and now she said, 'Well, I shall go back to the factory and manage it because your brother will have to go to the war.' And then Mother said to Father, 'Why, it isn't possible. Will you have to go to war, too?' And Father said, 'I don't know. Maybe I will be too old. I don't know yet what may happen.'

"It had been a nice vacation, but it was really over after that. Grandmother had brought some of the real things along with her."

We sat silent a while. Erna lit another cigarette, smoked quickly, her face tense with memories. She was in another place, another time. She began to talk again with a painful remembrance.

"You know, it is true nobody thought that we were starting the war. I know this is hard to see since it was so different in the Second World War. But please understand, because it is so necessary to understand, that people are not always the same. People change or, to put it more clearly, they become changed by the events which happen, by the things they experience.

"And then there was for us an extremely simple explanation of why we didn't start this war. You know it was somehow taken for granted that the nation which lost Alsace-Lorraine through the last war would start the next one. France had lost Alsace-Lorraine during the last war and so it seemed quite logical to us that she would start the next one.

/"Bismarck had waged wars to make the borders safe. Now we had our borders and we did not want a war. It was the other states who wanted war. This, I would say, was the general feeling, so actual war came as a shock.

"Grandmother went back the next day. Father wanted

to go back. Mother just refused to take it seriously. Next day the people in the inn where we were living became even more restless. New wires were exchanged between the countries. You had always the feeling, 'Well, who does it? Well—the government.' It was the first time we had known this queer feeling—someone does something and it has consequences, but you have nothing to say about it. More and more people went home. And still we stayed. Mother must have believed that if only she ignored war, then war would ignore her. But war came closer and closer, as threatening and frightening as a thunderstorm or a flood. Yes, like a catastrophe of nature! Its control had slipped out of the hands of every human being—that was our feeling.

“While we were there the mobilization order came. This was not yet the formal declaration of war. In that First World War everything went on in a very orderly way. First came the mobilization, then the armies marched into their positions—our armies and those of the enemies—and then war was declared.

“It had been a war of nerves. Now the real war began, and our first reaction was terrible excitement. It was in the morning when we heard it and already people were drinking wine to ‘*heil*’ the Kaiser. They were singing ‘*Wacht am Rhine*,’ and the German ‘*Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*,’ our national hymn, and they cried, ‘Oh, we will beat the French in a few weeks and they will never dare it again.’ The Rhinelanders still thought only of France.

“Father was the one exception but they didn’t want to hear him. They thought him a pessimistic north German who thought he knew everything better than the Rhinelanders, and so he just kept silent and drank wine with them.”

“What made him feel that war would be with more than France?” I asked.

“Oh, while talking I seem to have become so much a Rhinelander myself that I, too, forget all about Russia.

But the formal declaration of war against Russia came even earlier than against France.

"From the very beginning Father held the Kaiser responsible for the two-front war. Our relation with Russia had indeed been one of the main reasons for the differences between Bismarck and the Kaiser. Bismarck had always wanted to get an alliance or at least an assurance of neutrality from Russia in case France should try to get Alsace-Lorraine back. But the Kaiser was pro-British and since the British did not like a Russian-German alliance he did nothing to get it. At least this is how my father saw it, and how he told it to his daughter who admired him and listened to him earnestly. I would not say that I believed him—that would put it too consciously—nor did I ever hate the Kaiser as he did. I only stored his words and thoughts into some hidden shelf of my brain from where I was to take them out much later to ponder upon them and to find out for myself whether my father had been right or wrong."

"He believed that there would be a two-front war and that it would become a world war?" I asked.

"No, he wouldn't say a world war. He wasn't quite sure if England was going to enter the war, really. He thought maybe England would try to keep out and make business, and induce others to make the war."

"And what did he think of the United States?" I asked.

"He didn't think that they would enter the war at that time. At least I never heard a word about that from him."

"Well, the celebration of the beginning of the war didn't last long, since rumors came that railway travel for civilian persons would be interrupted because trains were needed for the Army. And now we began packing in a hurry."

"We went on the next train. We came to Cologne at five in the afternoon and sat in the station. It was crowded and no one could say whether there would be a train for civilians. Trains with soldiers went through slowly, the soldiers singing. They were, however, very seldom singing patriotic

songs, but more of 'the beloved one that I left behind' and that 'I will come back again very soon,' and such songs."

"Where did you expect the war to break into battle?" I asked.

"We never spoke about that. It was just against France," she replied.

"Did the people of Germany dislike the French people?" I asked.

She considered and then replied, "There was, I think, a century-old grudge between the two nations. The people didn't like one another."

"But most Germans learned to speak French," I reminded her.

She shook her head. "Still, that didn't bring much sympathy for France—no! In fact, we never met French people. So it was all different spots in your brain, one where the French literature was and one where the bad French lived—the bad French, who always envied Germany and who didn't want us to be a strong nation."

"And was that attitude in your textbooks at school?" I asked.

"No, that was just what people said when the question came to France. Then, the French women made up, used lipstick and perfumes, which was considered really French. We didn't do it; it was 'German' not to do it.

"Well, we made one of the last trains. The train took double time to go to Hamburg, but at last we came to Hamburg and to our home again. And it seemed strange that everything in the home was as we had left it.

"Now, let me tell you how the first months of the war were, when we thought it would be won in a few weeks. I begin with Mother. Mother was changed from the first day of the war. She was, in fact, a new woman, bursting with activity, feeling terribly important, as she had never been before in her life."

"Usually, was she rather idle?" I suggested, and added, "Like most middle-class women anywhere?"

Erna von Pustau laughed. "Well, you know, 'idle' is a

very funny word, because even when Mother said, 'Now we have really reached the bottom'—that means when Father was in not so good a position—still we had two maids, and one woman coming twice a week for the dirty work, and one woman coming every two weeks for the laundry. So I would say that Mother mostly was busy keeping these people busy. But now you could see how empty her life had been before, and how immensely happy she was that she found some meaning in her life. She went to the station three days a week to give hot coffee to the soldiers. She telephoned to all her friends, wanting to know who was drafted, who was not drafted. There was now something bigger than the household. There was a war and she was somehow connected with it. Every day in excitement she was repeating all the phrases in the newspaper—'Well, we will beat the French in a few weeks, and when the Russians come we will beat the Russians. They will be beaten in a few days.' And when the English came—'Oh, England! What can the English do to us!' So she repeated all the headlines of the newspapers constantly, and with a very excited voice.

"Well, this hurt her children terribly. We had been the important thing for her; now we were not at all important, we were bothering her. She would tell us, 'Go away with your childish things, there are big things at stake.' And 'What have I to do with your troubles?' and so on. Yes, we children felt rather forgotten, and we wanted to do something for the war very badly, too. Lotte, with whom I shared a room, complained every evening to me, 'If only I were a boy! If only I could be a soldier! If only I could beat the enemy!' Strangely enough, I never had the wish to be a boy or a soldier. I was quite contented with being a girl. I wanted to be a nurse.

"Then Father gave us something to do. The son of our gardener was drafted and our garden was in very bad shape; and my father came home and said, 'If you want to be useful during the war, why don't you clean the garden?' Well, it wasn't just the thing we had thought we

wanted to do for the war, but Father ordered it and so Lotte and I had to do it. We went into the garden and we picked the weeds. We had no tools for it, we just picked every weed up with our fingers. We had a little pail where we put them in very neatly.

"It was not really an important thing to do. Then Lotte said, 'Why don't we play "Eliminating Our Enemies"?' Well, then the weeds were Russians and French. And Lotte chose the easiest task—at least we thought it was—of eliminating the French, while I had to eliminate the Russians, who were so much larger in number than the French. So we picked weeds. I tell you this to show the mood in which we were. We were children and we played war. We eliminated the enemies in the garden.

"Meanwhile we got one declaration of war after the other. We learned a lot of geography from the distant countries declaring war against us. We always said, 'Well, the whole world is going crazy, they are all mad.' We looked at the countries. There was Japan—'What has Japan to do with us?' we asked one another. It was hard even to find it on the globe, and yet they had declared war against us.

"I want to make a point here which may be in your mind now. We broke the neutrality of Belgium but we were not aware of it."

"The German people did not know that the neutrality of Belgium was violated?" I asked amazed.

"No." she said firmly. "And I think one of the reasons why we really did not know of it was that we had so many declarations of war that we didn't notice that just Belgium hadn't declared war. So many things happened that we didn't have time to think.

"Father bought big maps and little needles on which were flags, the flags of the different countries, and the battle line was pinned up on this map. We children played 'Conquering'—conquering was play. At noon, at the lunch-time, in the street, came the cry of the newspaper man—'*Extrablatt, Extrablatt—Extrablatt*, a big victory, *Extra-*



*blatt*, a big victory!' And then we children ran and took the *Extrablatt*, the big victory, and pinned on our maps the advances we had made and the cities we had conquered. We were terribly excited about it, and Mother said, 'Well, in a few weeks we will be in Paris, and then the war is over.' But Father always looked at the map and said, 'No use, no use going to Paris. What we need is the coast. If we don't get the coast we won't stop the British coming over.' Mother said, 'You always have to criticize; you have an absolutely negative attitude to all of our victories.' Father said, 'Even if we have Paris, as long as we haven't the coast we are not safe from Britain, and Britain is the real danger.'

"After a few weeks we did stop at the coast. This stop was caused by the Battle of the Marne. Only Father noticed that we were stopped, and we did not hear anything of the Battle of the Marne at that time.

"The eastern front didn't look so well. The Russians came into Germany and conquered part of western Prussia. My father couldn't understand why we let them in so far at that time, but he didn't worry too much. But at school and in the newspapers we learned about the 'Russian cruelties' and the 'Russian barbarians.'

"Then came the battle against the Russians at Tannenberg and General Hindenburg's victory over the Russians. This is important, since Hindenburg became through this battle the general who freed the German land from the invaders, and the general who was the biggest hero of the war. In fact, no other general became ever so famous and so beloved as Hindenburg, who had thrown back the Russians from our own soil. This explains somehow how Hindenburg was so popular with the mass of the people later, and no other general equaled him.

"Yes, in my memory the first months of the war were full of enthusiasm and excitement. Yet still it was war even if very removed from Hamburg. But many fathers and sons and brothers were at the front and Grand-mother's letters were tense with worries for her son there.

"Wars are tears and blood. I think we children really got an idea of this side of the war when, one evening after dinner, Mother came with old bed linen and old sheets. There had been a call from the Red Cross that they were short of cotton lint, and they needed some kind of substitute. Mother told us that this would be used to cover the wounds of our soldiers. She showed us how to pull out the single threads of the sheet, cutting it in little pieces, and all evening we were busy pulling out the threads.

"My father naturally didn't help. He was playing his solitaire, as he was used to do every evening after having read the newspapers. We were not supposed to speak a word while he was busy with his solitaire. But while pulling the threads, a task on which I had to concentrate only a few minutes until I could do it mechanically, I began to think about the wounds which our threads were to cover, and it seemed all at once so unbelievable to me that people really shoot at each other and wound each other. Why did they do so? I suddenly wanted to know why wars started. Well, when my father had finished one of his solitaires and was mixing the cards for the next one, we were allowed to speak a word, and I said, 'But why do we have war?' Father said, 'Well, wars always come.' 'But why do they declare war against us? What did we do?' Father said, 'Well, we did not do anything at all.' He liked to quote Schiller and he did so now; 'Even the best man cannot live in peace if the bad neighbor does not want him to live in peace.' I said, 'Well, but why do we have so many enemies?' Then Mother interfered and said, 'They just envy us because we are such an industrious people and have stored up some wealth and they don't want us to have that.'

"Still I wondered, and there was something I couldn't just put my finger on, and I said to Mother, insisting as children do, 'But why *do we* have so many enemies?' Mother said, 'We are a people that is going to be a great nation. Other peoples sit in the sun and we just want to have a seat there, too.' Now, I, being a girl with a very big

imagination, saw us sitting in the golden sun already, and I said, 'Well, if the others have it, I want to have it, too.' I tell you this because the explanation, 'We want to have a seat in the sun,' was later on taken as a propaganda line for a 'bigger Germany.' At that time it really was that we wanted to be as big as the others."

"But you already were as big as France," I reminded her.

"That we were," she agreed, "but not as big as England. All the time we still thought of England as the real enemy. The Hamburgers being mostly foreign trading people, and finding Great Britain everywhere, looked at Great Britain just as Rhinelanders looked at France.

"Then Britain already threatened us with the blockade. The British blockade was a very new thing. It was, indeed, as we saw it, a kind of new warfare, since it threatened the civilian population. But at that time it seemed to us mostly a matter of propaganda rather than of real starvation or anything like that, since, as my mother and the newspapers pointed out, we had all Europe at our disposal, and the English might cut us off from the seas, but could not cut us off from the European hinterland.

"But from the very beginning Father worried about it, yet he saw that it was of no use to warn. The war was there, and what could one do against it, now that it had started? Besides, he had his personal troubles. He had, as I have said, become the head of the Eastern Asia Department of the shipping firm, with a fair salary. But the biggest part of his income came from the percentage of the business. Now between him and his business was the British Navy, and the new department had to be closed. The shipping firm offered him the job of a bookkeeper who was drafted, and at his own salary. My father had to take this work, being glad that he got more salary for it than he was entitled to get.

"This was not easy for him. Yet he did not think so much of his personal hardship as of the difficulty of making war without the raw materials which we needed. He

saw how the big warehouses began to empty out, and how less merchandise was coming in.

"The first time he openly spoke about it was at Christmas 1914. The time of enthusiasm and excitement was then over. People began to realize that this war was not to be won in a few weeks, but a long war, and a very bitter one.

"That Christmas one of my father's brothers visited us. This brother was an officer in the Navy. Uncle Eberhard came to us just on Christmas Eve, very unexpectedly. He was enormous, with his blue uniform and his gold epaulets. My sister Lotte just couldn't keep her eyes away from him. He had a terribly loud voice which frightened me. Well, he was at first very gallant, flirting with Mother—"The most beautiful sister-in-law and the most beautiful woman," he told her. He toasted her, he made jokes with her. Then he asked my father, 'By the way—how are things in Hamburg?' My father said, 'Well, business in Hamburg doesn't look very well.' Uncle Eberhard said, 'Business isn't going well? Well, don't you know that a war is going on?' Father said, 'Well, I think it will affect the war, too, if we have the British blockade, and you know as well as I that our navy is not strong enough to break the blockade.' My uncle said, 'You speak as if the German Navy is doing nothing. We have laid mines at the coast, we have sunk ships. We will blockade the British Isles, and I tell you, long before Germany has starved the British are going to starve and are going to be down on their knees.'

"Father was very upset and very excited, and he said, 'Why, you of the Navy, you have always this big talk. You know just how weak our navy is and how strong the British Navy is. It is no use talking so big. You have to face the fact, and you have to think about something else.'

"My uncle said, 'Well, for you it is not a matter of war or no war, it is a matter of business. And you Hamburgers—we hate you! You are shopkeepers like the British, and you have no patriotic feelings.'

"Father was very excited and his veins stood out very blue. Hammering with the fist on the table so hard that the wineglasses jumped, he said, 'Well, at least I have had an idea what we could do about it, and I have even written a memorandum about it.'

"I looked at Father. All of a sudden he seemed to us very important. Now Father told that he had sent a memorandum to the ministry proposing submarines for the merchant marine. You ought to have seen my Uncle Eberhard! He shouted, 'Submarines! Our navy—submarines for your business! For the merchant marine! What do you think we are!' You see, the militarists had a terrible contempt for business."

"Although if there were no business to tax there would be no militarists!" I said.

"They just thought the opposite," she told me. "They said how could people make business if there were no militarists?"

"When the two brothers were all but ready to go at each other, Mother interrupted them and said, 'Please, please, the children are still here.' And Uncle Eberhard, being the most sarcastic man I have ever seen, said, 'Oh, the little chickens are still here. Well, I quite forgot them. Go along, go along to your little basket.' 'Little basket' they say to a dog who goes to sleep! And so—'Go to your little basket,' you say that to the dog, but not to children at our age. But this uncle just said it. Then we obediently said good night. When he had kissed all three of us, he looked at Mother and said, 'Well, you could have produced one boy, at least. Nothing but girls!'

"So we went out of the room and went to sleep. We had drunk wine, too. I was quite dizzy. Lotte was terribly excited. She said, 'Isn't our uncle Eberhard just wonderful? Oh, why couldn't I have been born a boy?' "

"Was she pretty, too?" I wanted to see this sister Lotte.

"She was very pretty. She looked more like a boy than a girl. She had broad shoulders and narrow hips. And she

was always playing, wanting to be as wild with the boys as the boys were."

"Most girls wanted to be boys?"

"In the classrooms, in the schools, I heard many a girl complain that she wasn't a boy, that she couldn't be a soldier, that girls were of no use at all.

"But this, too, changed. Yes, the attitude toward women began to change at the beginning of 1915. As the men were drafted, women were needed, and all of a sudden women became important. We had an expression, 'Women can stand for men.' That meant, women are able to replace their men. Never had women heard such a thing! We saw the first woman in the streetcar, selling tickets. Well, she was quite an excitement. Lotte and I spent our whole weekly allowance traveling on this car, and we saved those precious tickets in our drawer in the little corner where our very precious things were kept.

"The mail was carried by a woman. We had a funny experience with that. The bell rang in the morning. Father opened the door to accept the mail as he did every morning. He just used to say, 'Good morning, good morning,' and 'Good-by,' and that was all. Now, this morning, we heard him say, with a very new voice, 'Hello, hello. Good morning. How are you?' That was queer. We heard him say, 'Well, isn't the bag too heavy for you?' We went out to the door and there was a woman mail carrier. She, however, was very manly. She just threw her bag with force up on her shoulder, turned her back to our father without replying to his nice chatter, and went away. Father stood there shaking his head and saying, 'Well, it seems that the charm has gone.'

"This 'women can replace men,' 'women are as good in many ways as men,' 'we need women for the war,' made Mother just a changed person. Now she had, indeed, stopped her work at the station. That kind of patriotism didn't last. But the talk made her feel very important, although she didn't do really important things, and this talk changed the relations between Mother and Father, be-

cause Mother discovered that, first, her household was as important as man's work, second, that she, as a woman, had the right to opinions and a right to be heard and to utter opinions. And she spoke from now on with a new self-consciousness and with a kind of bitterness and hatred against Father. It was a sort of general revenge of woman.

"Yet Father had always been very fair to her, and you couldn't expect him to see from one day to the other that the same Mother who didn't do anything more than she had done before was now such a very important person. But I must say that he used to hear her opinions with a tolerant mind, and the growing hatred and the bitterness really came more from Mother than from him.

"It was in the year 1915 that the household became more difficult; indeed, the blockade made itself felt. We had no rationing yet so the prices went up, and you could not get anything you wanted. My mother used to make her list of the items we needed the first thing in the morning, and there were always several items she could not get, so she had to make up her list anew. That was annoying; still more annoying it was that you had sometimes to stay in line at the shops.

"Now, we had two maids, Berthe, our maid whom we had since my family had come from China, and a second maid. This second maid often did the shopping, and she came home later and later. I couldn't say whether that was solely due to the standing in line, but she certainly had heard a lot of talk of maids who went to the factories where they earned better money, had eight hours' work and then were free.

"One day my mother said, 'Why, you come home later every day.' This maid said, 'Why don't you go there and stand in line yourself?' That was bad, indeed. Not only had she talked back, but she had done a thing that a maid never was allowed to do—she had said 'you.' So my mother fired her immediately. As you can see, my mother was for the emancipation of the housewives, but not for that of the maids! It was, however, not easy to find a new maid.

There was already a great manpower shortage and maids were hard to get.

"Mother, through an agency, did at last find a maid—a British subject but married to a German. And in the story of this British maid really for the first time I saw that war was a terrible thing. This British woman was married to a German who was in the Army. She had a little girl two years old. Her husband, after England's declaration of war, had asked for a divorce, and he had applied to the court to have the child taken away from the mother because he didn't want his child to be educated by a British woman. Mother told us that story before the maid came, telling us that we had to be extremely nice and tactful to this woman."

"Your mother had no personal feeling against the British?" I asked.

"No. I would say, as we never saw our enemies, our hatred was abstract, and it did not concern any person. We hated the British, but 'the British' was not something alive, in flesh. Mother felt sorry for the maid. Father said very often, 'Well, war is war, and in the war innocent people have to suffer, too. You can't help it.'

"Lotte and I were disgusted about the husband, but I was more shocked than Lotte because, for me, every German soldier was a gentleman with honor. That a German soldier could not only try to be divorced from his wife, but have the child taken away from its mother—I just couldn't grasp that. Ever since the war had started we had heard that we were the best and most moral of peoples. It seems that in war one's own nation is always superlative. Well, a German had behaved badly. And I spoke about it to Father and Mother, and they avoided answering me directly. I think they didn't want to destroy my illusion. But there was the fact. My oldest sister had quite another attitude. She was a hater of a very persistent nature. She said to Mother, 'It is disgusting that you take a British subject in our home.' Mother was very strong with her and said, 'If ever I find you doing something wrong to this



British woman, you will be shut-into your room for days.'

"The maid came. I had thought of the British as big and strong and proud, a bit the way we were, only that we were good. This British maid was small, a frightened woman, really a pitiful human being. Her eyes were always red from crying. She hardly tried to say anything. She spoke not a very perfect German, which, with all my sympathy, was difficult not to laugh at. Sometimes it sounded too funny, but Lotte and I tried hard not to laugh and to understand it, and Mother explained to us that it was not because the maid hadn't learned much and was not educated, but because it was a foreign language and if we were to speak English we would speak even worse.

"Lotte and I spoke with Berthe about what we could do to show to this British girl that we were on her side in this matter. We were more intimate with Berthe than we were with Mother. Berthe was our confidante. We said, 'What do you think if we shined our shoes ourselves?' No maid liked to shine the shoes, but we had never had the idea that we would do it ourselves; now we just wanted something to show our sympathy with her. And Berthe said, 'I don't think that is the right way. Just don't mention it at all, and act as if nothing were wrong with her.'

"Mother went with this maid to the court and made a good statement, trying to save the child for her, really taking her side. Father warned her against it, saying, 'Why don't you mind your own business?' But Mother said, 'Really, if the man wants a divorce let him have it, but I won't stand it that the child should be taken away from the mother, too.'

"It was all for nothing. The child was taken away from the mother and put in an orphanage. That day, when the maid got the decision of the court, we came home and she was crying, 'I'll throw myself in the Elster, I'll throw myself in the Elster'—Elster being the Alster, pronounced by her in the English way. This cry was so loud it went through our whole apartment, and Lotte and I were so

frightened we were crying, too. Then Father came home and, hearing this crying, he said to Mother, 'But you can't have this maid crying in the house. That's impossible.' He never liked tears nor crying. And I think it was because he, too, wasn't up to the situation that he was more harsh than he would have been usually. He said, 'Well, before she cries like that, teach her how to pronounce Alster like Alster and not like Elster.'

"This little thing I will never forget in my whole life because that she was crying 'Elster' was for me a sign of how forlorn she must be. That made her so different and alone.

"Now somehow when Father was hard it made me feel again that not all of us were the best of all people, that we could be very cruel, too. It was not so clear to me—I was too young. But it was like little pieces of puzzles which came together later on.

"The maid kept on crying, and Mother called the doctor. I think the trouble was too much for Mother, too. So she just gave her away to the hospital and I never heard from her again.

"I want to speak now about Grandmother. She had gone back to the factory, but her son had insisted that his wife was to replace him in the factory for the duration. This was, naturally, a terrible thing to happen to Grandmother, and at first she was very angry about it. In her letters to Mother she even threatened to close the factory altogether. But as she got more and more government orders and the factory became busy producing for the war she even discovered that 'her daughter-in-law wasn't as bad as she had thought.' I thought it good of Grandmother to make peace with 'the Catholic' and it seemed to me that the Kaiser had meant just such things when he had proclaimed, 'Parties don't matter any longer, now we are all but Germans.'

Yes, we were all Germans, united as never before, because we all were threatened and 'surrounded by a world of enemies,' as the slogan went. A 'cordon of iron' was

drawn around Germany. But two things happened in our family which lifted a bit the cordon so we could look into the world.

"Mother's youngest brother had emigrated to South America long before the war. He had a ranch there. One day, it must have been early summer, 1915, we got a letter saying that he had come back to Germany. Well, he was a hero to us. This man had broken through the entire British blockade, had come over from South America in order to fight for Germany. He came to visit us before he went to the eastern front.

"This hero was a very shy man. He was of Grandmother's stature, rather rotund, much smaller than Father, and he didn't like to talk much.

"Father asked him, 'Why did you come? It would have been much wiser to stay there.' This uncle simply said, 'Well, it is my duty and I didn't want to leave my country alone in the time of emergency.'

"Father said, 'Well, and how do things look for us overseas?' My uncle said—you had rather to pull it out from him—he said, 'Well, we have done some pretty silly things—some stupid things.' Father said, 'For instance?' 'Well, for instance, the breach of the neutrality of Belgium,' my uncle replied.

"Father said, 'Well, so what of it? If we hadn't done it the French would have done it. It is a matter of hours, in the war, to be the first.' Then he said, 'Unfortunately, it didn't help us much. We have not achieved our goal. I can't understand why, but we didn't get the coast.' Then my uncle said, 'Well, that is because we have lost the Marne battle.' Father made a very thoughtful face and said, 'Must be, must be.'

"Mother said, 'Do you say we have lost a battle? Who said that? It is enemy propaganda.' Father said, 'I am afraid he is right. I always knew there was a reason why we couldn't advance. There must have been a reason, only I couldn't put my finger on it.'

"Now he had my uncle tell everything he knew about

the Marne battle. And he said, 'It is a scandal—it is a scandal. They don't tell us the truth!'

"But Mother, instead of thinking things over, said, 'You make the enemy propaganda here!'

"Father kept silence, and when Mother went out after some sandwiches he said, 'Well, how do you think things are in America?' My uncle said, 'I don't know whether they will keep neutral or not.' Father said, 'I just can't believe it. But maybe you are right. Do the Americans really think that it is neutral when they help the British?' 'Well,' my uncle said, 'maybe they just think it is business. They can't get through to Germany, so they have to sell their things where they can get through.'

"My uncle was very disillusioned about Germany. He said, 'I thought I would be welcome here. I thought you were all united in one iron will to win, but everybody asks me, "Why didn't you stay there, why did you come back?"'

"My father said, 'This is no longer the easy war of the first month. We are in it now and for a long time. We feel the blockade more and more heavily. And we have too many enemies. You can't expect us to be excited but we will do our best.'

"Now my uncle could have stayed overseas. There was no force to pull him back to Germany. But it just didn't enter his mind not to do what he thought was his duty."

"Did your uncle, too, believe that Germany had not begun the war?" I asked.

"He thought that it did not matter which army marched first because the war against Germany—not Germany's war against others—would have broken out, if not one month then the next."

Erna stopped to put out one cigarette and light another. The past had become the present again for her. She went on: "None of us thought of who fired the first shot. Everybody believed that war was begun against Germany by those who did not want Germany to become strong."

"The question of breaking the neutrality, after my uncle's visit, did not come up again as far as I can remem-

ber, in our family. In the next year, 1916, a sister of Father's came home. This sister had been married in Russia."

"To a Russian?" I asked.

"No, to a German merchant who had lived in Riga. Her husband and her son were interned in Russia. She came to Germany with her daughter, through Swedish help in the exchange of women and children. From this aunt I learned a lot of things. I learned that there was no great difference between the enemies in the west and the enemies in the east. Enemies in the west, I had been told, were in some ways civilized enemies. The Russians, however, were just barbarians, uncivilized, ruthless, cruel, every one of them."

"Was that an old attitude? Did the Germans always feel that the Russians were barbarians?" So I asked.

"It is an old attitude, yes," she replied. "It went far down in the people. Russia was a country of backward peasants, and of the Czar with his Cossacks. And we spoke of the Russians as Cossacks, and Cossacks were just the same as barbarians.

"This aunt entered our house and Mother immediately threw herself upon her—'My dear Julia, my dear Julia, my poor Julia, what you must have suffered!' My aunt said, 'I haven't suffered more than anybody else'—speaking very abruptly, very strongly, and very firmly, and as an emancipated woman speaks.

"Mother said, 'Well, all alone, among the barbarians—' My aunt said, 'What do you think people are? People are as nice everywhere as they are here. My own fellow countrymen, when they hear that I just arrived from Russia, look at me as if I were a spy!'

"We lingered over tea, and my aunt told us how her Russian friends helped her, making applications for her son so that he could come into another and better internment camp, giving her shelter in St. Petersburg, helping her in every way they could.

"Mother asked, 'But aren't the Russians terribly dirty?'

In her firm way of speaking Aunt Julia replied, 'Dirty or not dirty, I know that the Russian people dislike war as much as we do or even more.'

"And you know, this really did something to my mind. It questioned another of our assumptions which we took for granted without thinking them over twice. Aunt Julia's talk lifted the iron curtain much wider than the visit of Mother's brother and I saw, beyond that curtain, people who were much like ourselves.

"Aunt Julia talked often about Russia after that evening. The picture of Russia I got from her was strange and exciting. For instance, she told us that she never was bored at Russian parties. She said, 'They discussed everything. And women had their political opinions, too, and they could discuss—well, politics, and they could discuss God, and they could discuss literature, while here women discuss only their households or just glance at the headlines of the newspapers.'

"She was a very emancipated woman. Father quarreled with her immediately about—I don't know—about some little thing, and he said he didn't want to see her in his apartment again. Ah, I know! I told you of this brother of his who lived in Hamburg. My aunt had visited this other brother first before she came to visit us. Father, learning of this, didn't want to see her again in his apartment. My aunt immediately said, 'Your apartment! This is your apartment and your wife's apartment, and I think your wife has to say something, too.' That was a very new language, which pleased Mother enormously. She was extremely fond of this aunt who helped her in her fight against Father. And, although I loved Father very much, I was very glad about this aunt, too, diminishing and weakening the authority of the man. I admired her much more than I admired Mother."

"Did your aunt keep on coming, then?" I asked.

"She kept on coming," Erna said with satisfaction. "And, in fact, she was soon the only woman whose political opinions Father took seriously. He got very fond of

her. And I really think she was the first woman he ever met whom, after he had overcome his brotherly hatred, he liked and esteemed very highly."

"Is it your theory that all brothers and sisters hate one another, naturally?" I asked, smiling.

"No," she replied. "In Mother's family there was a very close and warmhearted connection between the family members, and I think that Father's family was unusual in this matter. The reason, I think, was that his family was split up very soon. My grandfather, having been a millionaire in his time, had lost all his money and had died, and the sisters and brothers had been split up and everybody had to care for himself and had become hard and bitter very young. But this was unusual. Besides, every one of them was quite a personality.

"The families of my father and my mother represented two very different parts of the German bourgeoisie. Mother, for instance, came from a settled family while my father's family was restless.

"They came from the lower noblesse and large parts of this lower noblesse had sided with the bourgeoisie in the 1848 revolution. The tradition of a liberal bourgeoisie opposing the Kaiser and a restless, expanding bourgeoisie at the same time—this was my father's family.

"I would call my uncle Eberhard, the Navy officer, a very typical type of aggressive, imperialistic German, really military-aggressive, while my father believed in expansion, but in more businesslike ways. They are in themselves very fair examples for the two types of Germany's expansion—either military-aggressive or business-aggressive—they were typical of the German bourgeoisie."

"Would you say that the military-aggressive and the business-aggressive had the same objectives, that of establishing an empire that might rival Great Britain's?" I asked.

"Yes," she said.

"That was their common aim?"

"Yes," she said again.

I persisted. "Was it expressed as such? Did they think in terms of an empire with colonies or of great business? In other words, what I am trying to get at is this—was it more the British type of imperialism, in which they actually owned, politically and economically, masses of people and territory, or was it the American type of imperialism, which thinks in terms of controlling the trade of other countries?"

"It is very good that you put the question," she replied. "Father did think more in terms of American imperialism and of great business while his brother thought more in terms of British imperialism. It might interest you that his brother always advocated a German-Japanese alliance as a means of greater power, while Father advocated a free China and a German-Chinese friendship as a means for greater business."

"He actually thought Germany would gain more power and money if it worked co-operatively with people rather than controlling them?" I asked.

"Yes." She said this firmly.

"Would you say that these two groups, military and business, could work together, or was there enmity between them?" I asked.

"There was enormous enmity between them. This enmity came partly because of the constant contempt of the militarists for the merchants, and partly because the militarists had 'such a big mouth,' as Father used to say."

"Would you say that your father represented the liberal element, and your uncle the conservative?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Would you say that the German military clique was always politically conservative, at least on the side of reaction, not for independence of peoples, not for freedom of speech, and so on?" I went on.

"I think yes—I think yes!" she said eagerly. "But I know that it is very difficult, for many reasons, to see my father as a liberal. I will stress this since people now always think of Hitler and what he has done and they think it has



always been the same. I will give you one example to make this clearer. Hitler, for instance, had invaded Austria and had incorporated it into the German Reich. Now, the incorporation of Austria into Germany was an old question, and a united Germany-Austria was an old goal of the liberals as well as of the socialists, and not only of the Germans but of the Austrian liberals and socialists as well. This was, in fact, what they called the 'bigger Germany,' which meant the unity of the German-speaking nations. After the end of the First World War, when the Austrian Empire collapsed and her subjugated nations, such as Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, freed themselves from Austrian domination, Austria remained but a very small country, economically unable to rely on herself, and the cry for union with Germany became very strong indeed. At that time the Allies did not want the union, not even a custom union between these two countries. Later Hitler enforced it ruthlessly while the Allies kept silent. Yet the conception of a union by both German and Austrian liberals and leftists had nothing to do with Hitler's action.

"But let me go back to my family. Mother's family was much more average for the bourgeoisie than was Father's. They accepted things as they were, they minded their own business and let the government make politics. The Von Pustaus, however, although really they belonged to the bourgeoisie, in their minds still belonged to the nobility."

"That is, intellectually they had chosen the side of the bourgeoisie, but emotionally they were still with the lower nobility?" I asked.

"Their enormous interest in politics was certainly a result of this, and they thought it a personal responsibility," she replied. "But please keep in mind that here I am not speaking of the Junkers or of big business. Of them I will speak later."

"Did the German people—and your family, for example—still not feel it was an aggressive war?" I asked. I wanted to be very clear on this point. Here in America we had thought of the Germans only as aggressors.

"Certainly not," she said firmly. "Think of Germany's geographical situation, in the very heart of Europe. Every European nation had armies from the very beginning, first mercenary armies, later military conscription. But all were armed, and Germany's neighbors were as strong as Germany herself, militarily. It is very hard for Americans to understand this situation, because you never have known it. Think for a moment—if you had an armed America and an armed Canada, but Canada nearly as strong as America, and Mexico as big as Russia and militarily nearly as strong as America. No European nation ever knows when the next war will come. Out of this German geographical situation there has long been a theory that attack is the best means for defense. Yes, to attack first was what we thought safest. We did not think it aggression. This is new for America but not so unknown as it was before. For since the new kind of air war America, too, can no longer feel absolutely safe. Therefore the theory of defensive attack is now developing here, also.

"So no nation in Europe really felt secure. It was a matter of who had the choice of time. We never thought that the others would not attack us. We swiftly chose the moment to be the first, because Germany, being rather small and surrounded by two nations, would have had no chance. So since Frederick the Great all military strategy has been that attack is the best means of defense. We accepted it that we were the first to attack. But I tell you truly, we didn't feel aggressive."

"You didn't feel responsible even for forcing the war?" I asked.

"No." She said this firmly.

"It was for you simply a case that war was inevitable and you had to think of yourself first." I was repeating her words.

"Yes, yes, I would put it that way," she agreed. "Really I can truthfully say that the German people considered the First World War one of defense. The feeling of the soldiers, the feeling of the people at home, was not that

of aggression or of wanting to conquer, but only of wanting to hold our own."

"That was the attitude of the people. Did your leaders have definite ideas of conquest—for example, of getting a seacoast somewhere, of getting ports, of getting a greater part of the world, and colonies?" I asked.

"As to the colonies, I was too young to remember how the people felt toward them," she replied frankly. "I only remember them as being lost after the war. But I knew that we had the '*Altdeutschen*.' I never met an *Altdeutschen* myself and they were extremely unpopular. My father called them 'hypocrites like our Kaiser' and when they were mentioned he would say, 'It is our Kaiser and his clique who don't know where the end of the power is.' I told you how we played 'Conquest' by pinning the needles on the map. That was, however, not conquest for keeps but conquest to end the war more quickly. The sooner we were in Paris, the sooner the war would be over, we thought. But I remember, in 1917, when a separate peace with Russia came in sight our family discussed the annexation of the Ukraine. For us who were hungry, the Ukraine was closely linked with wheat and all kinds of crops and so of better food.

"But if you don't mind I would like to pick up the thread of my story where we left it, that is in 1916 when Aunt Julia came from Russia and we were not yet really hungry. That year began with the battle of Verdun. And with this 'battle for Verdun,' which became after a while 'the terrible fight for Verdun' and, at last, 'the hell of Verdun,' the losses in dead grew very high indeed, and more and more of the children in the school came dressed in black dresses. One of our cousins was killed, another gravely wounded. We children weren't so gay any more. We all felt death coming to more and more families.

"Even at her first visit Aunt Julia said 'to me, 'You have very beautiful eyes, but they are much too earnest for your age.' Well, I guess many a child had eyes too earnest for its age, and I had a very personal reason too

for my earnest eyes. I had a great responsibility because I had to provide my family with vegetables.

"At the end of 1915 my father had decided to change our garden, our beautiful luxury garden with the well-kept lawn, into a vegetable garden. Now, Americans may here think in terms of their 'victory gardens' but such a term never entered our mind. At the beginning, my father called it our 'independence from the grocery store' but it soon became a rather grim business, a constant fight to fill our empty stomachs.

"My oldest sister had too much to do for school, Lotte always found some excuse why she couldn't work in the garden, so I had to care for it. Unfortunately I had a very difficult skin and from anything I touched I got eczema. So my hands were not only dirty but also usually infected, and Mother, who never was really ill in all her life, just couldn't bear it. She always tried not to look at me. Because of this eczema I was taken out of school and being now at home all the time I had to do everything."

"Do you mean you dug and hoed?" I asked, with pity for the child.

"Yes, I did everything," she answered, "although my father explained everything theoretically to me. He had bought a booklet called *The Little Gardener*. According to this magazine I did all. But this magazine did not think of a garden that was made out of lawn, so in the first year the lawn grew more than the vegetables and lettuce. The lettuce, which I put in the best sun spots, grew high instead of developing big heads, and we couldn't use much of the vegetables, either. We had, therefore, to look for other means, because in 1916 the food situation grew very difficult. Every Sunday we went out into the country and collected nettleweed, because, boiled, it was like spinach. But it was very hard to gather. The newspaper said, 'If you only take it firmly and strongly your skin won't burn.' Ours did, just the same. Still the vegetable didn't taste so bad, at least not for hungry stomachs.

"We gathered mushrooms, and every one of us had a

basket on the arm, and we went to the forests. And it was just terrible for me, because forests were fairy tales in my childhood—all the fairy tales dealt with forests, and I liked to dream in forests, and I liked to look at the beautiful forests. But, oh, when I dared to dream now or to look at the forest instead of gathering mushrooms! We lost all interest in the beautiful landscape, and only looked at our feet, to see where could we see the next mushroom.

"The mushrooms and the nettleweed helped us to get at least a bit more vegetable than we would have had from our garden.

"Fresh vegetables and fruit were hard to get and high in price. Oh, we tried, too, to preserve fruit. We had strawberries in the garden, and cherries. But there was already a great coal shortage and we had gas for only a few hours a day, not enough gas to cook the fruit. So we tried to preserve it raw by means of a vacuum pump which was to void the jars. After a few weeks it spoiled and we had to eat it in a hurry.

"During the course of the year 1916 rationing began, and at the end of the year everything was rationed. Thus, it took us two years to get rationing into operation, and I think this shows how unprepared our government was for war. The Nazis, you know, prepared their war; they introduced rationing even before they started the Second World War.

"During the entire summer I did not go to school. When fall came it was Aunt Julia who intervened and she provided a tutor for me and when the winter came I went back to school. So, you see, I had many reasons to adore Aunt Julia and weigh carefully in my mind every word she said."

"Didn't you have compulsory education in Germany?" I inquired.

"We had, but at first I was declared by my doctor to be too ill to go to school. Then the time passed and nobody just cared about it. Mother having so many patriotic duties had not time to care for what was going on with her own

child. And don't forget my family depended upon my work in the garden. Next year, by the way, the garden became easier to handle, the old lawn didn't try to grow again, and I had more experience.

"I told you that Father first called our garden 'independence from the grocery store.' I think these words show very clearly how things had changed since the beginning of the war. We had lived in what would be called here a friendly neighborhood. We had been good customers and as such had been held in high esteem and we had been on good terms with the storekeepers. But with food getting scarce and prices getting high, the friendliness disappeared. And there was a new term, the 'war profiteer.'

"We were no longer one undivided people but people who took advantage of those who were in need. This change in the friendly neighborhood always stays in my mind as the beginning of the slow decay of ethical, moral values which we had taken for granted.

"This change came even to us through letters from Grandmother. She still worked in the factory with her daughter-in-law.

"She was what was now called an 'old-fashioned' type of manufacturer. That is, she only sold the best quality, she never cheated her customers, and she took just the price that left a small profit margin—and nothing more. Now the quality of raw materials got worse. Grandmother couldn't understand what was going on. 'I can't sell this bad quality, I would cheat my customers,' she would say. But not only did the quality get worse but she had to charge higher prices. Her daughter-in-law explained to her that she must do so because the prices of new raw materials were constantly rising. Grandmother never could understand this changed condition and she was really of the opinion that this 'younger generation'—as her daughter-in-law was to her—was not honest.

"For months her letters were filled with complaints. Mother discussed them with Father at mealtimes. They both thought Grandmother 'too old to keep pace with the

times,' as Father expressed it, and he himself wrote a letter to Grandmother in which he sided with his sister-in-law. I did not understand everything but I remember once I said to Mother, 'But isn't that just what the grocer does to us?' Mother was disgusted with my remark.

"Well, you see, our system was founded on competition, only before that time it was hidden behind friendliness and honesty. Now egoism and selfishness came more and more out into the open. It was no longer so much 'live and let the others live too' but 'look out for yourself first.' These things I did not feel very distinctly, but I felt them—not to speak of the grocer who had no more sweets to give to us children, which was very sad indeed, because that had been part of the friendly neighborhood too.

"It was a sad year, the year 1916, and we thought this war would never end. But at the beginning of 1917 came the first hope for peace.

"This hope came to us with the Russian February Revolution. Oh, no, we did not become Bolsheviks! For us, this Russian revolution meant, as Father said, the possibility of a separate peace with Russia."

"Were you able to feel in Germany that there was an unrest among the Russian people before the revolution?" I asked.

"No—not so far as I can remember," Erna replied. "It happened far away and the only connection with us was the talk about the separate peace. Yet there was at least something more and very new. Father, who was always against the Kaiser, was, aside from hoping for a separate peace, much interested in the fact that the Czar had to go, and he told us, 'Well, the Russians knew what they did, and the Russians don't want the Little Father Czar any more, and if here in this country nothing changes, maybe something like it happens here, too.' It was for me and for my sisters very interesting that authority, which was never doubted here, was broken in Russia, and being very much children living in the family circle, we looked upon even

our father's authority with new eyes. The day of the February Revolution was the same day on which Father gave my oldest sister a very heavy beating. He had his 'spending mood,' as we used to call it, and he wanted to invite us to a café. But my oldest sister didn't want to go. She was soon to be confirmed, and she thought it was a sin for her, at such a time, to go to a café on a Sunday. But she didn't explain that to Father, and only said she didn't want to go, and Father, out of no reason, coming from the best of his moods into a very bad mood, gave her a terrible beating. We thought, 'Well—this beating, we don't want to have it any longer. If the Russians don't want their czar any more, why do we have to have so much beating?' And Lotte and I made up our minds to make 'solidarity.' That was a new word from the Russian revolution. Father said that the Russians were acting 'in solidarity' against the Czar and his Cossacks.

"So we thought we, too, would refuse to go out with our father. But we wanted at least to have the backing of Mother. We went to Mother and explained it to her. But Mother didn't want to help us. She said, 'I have enough of a mess at home, and you go out with Father.' We felt very much disgusted with her—she wasn't revolutionary at all! We felt that she wanted to maintain the authority, yet we had not courage enough to act alone.

"So we went out with Father, and he gave us a cup of chocolate with saccharin—water chocolate with saccharin in it—and something that was called cake and didn't taste like anything. And he absolutely had forgotten that he had beaten his oldest child. He was very nice and charming. But I had read very much in Mother's magazine on women's emancipation, and from that very day on I think I was resolute in my decision to become one day an emancipated woman, very much against the authority of man.

"So that, although the revolution was vague and distant, there were several points which touched the real questions, although it was very vague still.

"Very vague, too, seemed the hope for a separate peace



necessary, but it is like any other good thing—if it is perverted or becomes an obsession it can be dangerous.”

Erna considered again before she spoke. Then she said, “I would say that this idealism went even far into the working class. I could see later on when I came together with groups of the working class that this idealism was even stronger and more firmly rooted in them than it was in our middle class.”

I was half ashamed of my persistence and yet I wanted to know. “Was this also state propaganda or was it solely in the schools and a natural part of German culture?”

“It was really part of the culture of Western civilization,” she replied, “only we didn’t think in terms of ‘Western civilization’ at that time, but only of German culture.”

“What part did religion play in it?” I asked.

“Our German ideals came from Christianity, and from *Faust*, and from our lyrics, and from Bach, and from all these things together,” she replied.

“I must say, however, that I very soon distinguished between Christianity and the Church. I will make one difference—in the Church there was the organ music, and the chorales, which always woke in me this feeling of what I would call Christianity, but the talks of the priests and the pastors were so strongly national, and so condemning the enemies, that the conception of forgiveness of enemies, which I think is part of this whole idealistic view, seemed inconceivable to the Church. And you know, the language of the Bible is a very strong language, and you can really condemn in very strong words.

“In the composition I mentioned before, I wrote that we have to think of the peace, too, and that our first task for the peace would be to forgive our enemies—not that the enemies would forgive us, but that we would forgive them—and establish peace and understanding again between the nations.

“My teacher gave me an excellent mark for this composition. And although I would say that my idealism might

have been overstressed, still my teacher shared it. She was a very pious woman."

She paused, then began again abruptly.

"Well, we could write good compositions and the grown-ups could discuss many things. But, the separate peace with Russia didn't come. There came, instead, America's declaration of war against Germany. As to the reaction of my family, I want to say that we children didn't care much about it. My oldest sister, Hilde, was going to be confirmed at that time, and, as my sister Lotte put it, 'Well, declarations of war you can have a lot of, but you only have one confirmation in your life.' So we were busy with that.

"But let me show you how differently the peoples look upon things, especially during war.

"The official reason given for the American declaration of war was the German declaration of unrestricted U-boat warfare. This seemed to be a moral question. But we thought it a question of life and death in our attempts to break the British blockade. At that time, our hatred against the British was no longer so 'abstract' and a poem became very popular whose refrain ran, 'We have but one real enemy, and that is Great Britain.'

"I tell you this, because I have had occasion to see a few articles in the Goebbels press during this Second World War, and it may be interesting here to connect things a bit. It was at the time of the bombing of the English cities, that I saw an article against the too soft-hearted among the German people who seemed not to like the idea of bombing cities.

"In this article the Germans were reminded of the British blockade during the First World War and were asked: 'Have you forgotten what the British did to the German people? How they starved our women and children?'

"Yes, the Nazi propaganda always knew very cleverly to which emotions from the past it could link its propaganda.

"As to the German declaration of unrestricted U-boat warfare, which meant the bombing of neutral ships, too, I

can only say that we no longer considered America neutral because she delivered arms and goods to our enemies. Our reaction, especially the emotional reaction of the female part of the family, was—"They haven't been neutral and so we have the right to unrestricted U-boat warfare." To put it into the somewhat pathetic language of that time, 'You can't leave unchallenged what they are doing.' War-times are times of very pathetic language.

"I only remember Mr. Holzman very shyly putting the question whether it was right of us to bomb neutral ships—although he, too, shared our opinion that America was not 'neutral.' "

"Did you know any Americans?" I asked.

"No, and I didn't know anybody who knew any," she replied. "The general feeling toward them was that they liked to do business, and they couldn't do business with us because the British fleet was between, so they had to do business with Britain. People thought the American declaration of war was only to strengthen the morale of our enemies and to legalize the delivery of arms and goods that they had already done.

"Father did not think at that time that the Americans would come in force. He was far more worried about the separate peace with Russia which did not come. He thought this was the Kaiser's fault, that the Kaiser was mad not to make 'peace at any price,' so that our armies could be concentrated on the western front. How often did I hear him say, 'If we do it now, we still have a chance to strike a decisive blow in the west.' "

"And people were beginning to fear that the war would be lost?" I asked.

"That would put it too strongly," she answered. "I really didn't hear anybody say that the war could be lost. But that it would be won—that was said less and less. We might have to accept a peace of compromise, a peace in which Alsace-Lorraine would go back to France; but that the war would be so utterly lost at the end—that nobody really thought.

"Yet while we were not so much worried about the military repercussions of America's entrance into the war, the personal repercussions were very great indeed. Grandmother had to close the factory!

"It was her son, now at the western front, who insisted upon it. He was an officer and at the front he must have seen and known more of our own weakness and the strength of our enemies than we, the civilians, could learn from our censored newspapers.

"Things were not going well in Grandmother's factory. The government orders went more and more to bigger factories, and without government orders there was no way of getting raw materials. She had to close the factory for weeks, but being a rather old-fashioned kind of businesswoman, she had kept her workers even when she closed down—on reduced wages, naturally, but she had kept them. It was the habit of many old-fashioned factories to keep their stock of qualified workers even in times of depression. Always believing that the end of the war would be near, Grandmother thought, 'Well, I lose money now, but I shall earn it again after the war.'

"Her son stopped this when he came on leave. Grandmother now decided to come to Hamburg. For me, this was naturally the most wonderful thing, as you can imagine.

"Well, she came, and it seemed already the first evening as if there could be no peace between her and my father.

"Father immediately wanted to know why her son had insisted on closing the factory, and what did he see at the front that made him feel that the war would still go on for a long time. Grandmother immediately replied, 'You can read everything in the papers, and it is silly to have the factory closed.' She was very upset about this question. But Father said very dryly, 'There isn't anything in the papers, and, besides, I don't believe them. I would prefer to have the report of somebody who is at the front and who knows.'

"Grandmother, being extremely faithful to our Kaiser,

said, 'How can you doubt anything the Kaiser and our headquarters say?' Tears came out of her eyes and she really began to cry.

"Mother asked Father immediately to stop his questions, and I came to Grandmother, snuggling to her, and Father saw it was of no use trying to learn anything from her. But, as Grandmother now knew his attitude, the relation between the two was very tense during the time of her stay.

"As I told you, I was always the daughter who had to do most at home because I was the youngest one, and the older ones had so many other things to do.

"Now, when Grandmother was there it was just wonderful to darn the stockings and repair the laundry—and we had to repair everything time and again because we couldn't buy new things. We sat on our porch and she read stories to me while I was busy repairing the laundry.

"She read a story of a German author, Fritz Reuter. He was not well known because he wrote all his books in a northern German dialect. Grandmother had terrible difficulties in reading his dialect. But the story was very exciting. It had the title *No Shelter*. It was the story of a German Junker estate of the old feudal times. The Junker was a bad man, and he had a farm hand who was very much in love with a farmer's girl on this estate. But the Junker himself loved the girl, for she was very beautiful, and as the Junker had the right to give or refuse housing to his workers—because everything belonged to him—he refused housing to this farm hand. Thus this poor man couldn't marry his girl. The end of this story was that the farm hand, with his girl, escaped to America.

"I want to stress that this America of the story had nothing to do, for me, with the America against whom we were fighting and who was fighting against us. It was a name out of the world, a fairyland into which you could escape for freedom.

"One afternoon, while Grandmother was reading this story to me, Father came in and he was very amazed that

Grandmother read such a story. He began to tell the story of Fritz Reuter, who had been on the side of the liberals in the German revolution of 1848 and later was imprisoned for years. And I learned that Father's father, too, had been with the revolutionaries and that he, after the defeat of the revolution, had to flee from Prussia. He came to Hamburg, which was a free city at that time, and here he married the daughter of a rich merchant, who had a German eastern Asia business.

"It was so exciting—I had a grandfather who was a hero fighting for the poor people of whom Fritz Reuter wrote! And then my father began to sing one of the fighting songs of the German republicans of the 1848 revolution. One of the leaders was a man named Heckert. Whenever you are asked whether Heckert is still alive, the song ran, then you shall answer them:

'Yes, Heckert is still alive.  
He doesn't hang on a tree,  
He doesn't hang on a rope.  
He only hangs on the dream  
Of the German Republic.'

"My father sang this song with a very loud voice and at this moment it became apparent that Grandmother had not been aware of what she was reading. She had read the story as a fiction and without any connection to the history of our country. She got so upset that she wanted to forbid Father to sing this song.

"Here, for the first time, I understood that I was not only Grandmother's child, as in my heart I had always felt, but in a very great part Father's child, with his traditions, too, and after that I drew a clear line between what I could speak about with Grandmother and what I could not.

"One person I could not speak about to her was Aunt Julia because Grandmother didn't like to hear of women's emancipation. This seemed queer to me, because Grandmother was a really emancipated woman, having her own business. But she never accepted it as emancipation. 'I do

my duty,' she used to say, 'and since my husband is dead, I replace him, as my woman's duty.' But she would never hear anything about women's emancipation.

"All in all, that summer together with Grandmother was a lovely summer. But one morning, when it was ended and autumn began, I had a dispute with Mother, before I went to school. I still went without stockings and only with wooden sandals, which we all wore during the summer to save our shoes. Mother said, 'It is too late in the year, you have to put on stockings, at least.' But as I had to darn all the stockings of the family, I wasn't so eager to have my own stockings to darn, and I wanted to postpone it as long as possible. Besides, my old shoes were worn out and I needed a pair of new ones very urgently, but that was a matter of fighting for days. You couldn't just go to a shoe store and ask for shoes. Even if you were lucky enough to find a pair, you couldn't buy them, because you had to fill out applications and show your old shoes to the administration to let them see how much in need of shoes you were; and if the application went through you had to go to the police and have the application stamped. And all that made a lot of work and I was always so busy with Grandmother and the books I read and the things I had to do that I wanted to postpone it as long as possible. Mother then told me, 'Well, if your teacher still comes without stockings and wooden sandals, I will allow you to continue, but if not, you will from tomorrow on have to put on stockings and apply for shoes.'

"My teacher did come that day without stockings and with her wooden sandals, and I was very eager to tell this to my mother, so that day I hurried home from school. I rang the bell and nobody answered. I rang the bell a second time and, waiting, wondered why nobody came. Then I heard very soft steps and Berthe opened the door. She had red eyes and I immediately saw from her face that something had happened. Berthe only said to me, 'Grandmother.' I looked at her, and she said, 'Uncle Fritz has been killed.' And then I heard from far behind in the

apartment Grandmother crying. I went to my room and sat on my bed and I listened. I heard Grandmother cry again, 'Fritz, my Fritz,' and then silence. I heard the voice of my mother, but I couldn't understand what she said. My grandmother cried again, and always she cried, 'My Fritz, my Fritz' or 'My God, my God,' and I just lay on my bed listening.

"After a while my sister Lotte came and said, 'Father is waiting for you to come to lunch.' I didn't answer her. And she left me alone.

"But I wasn't allowed to see Grandmother, and Mother insisted that I go to school the next morning as usual.

"We went to school and when we came home Berthe said, 'Grandmother is going home this evening.'

"I only saw Grandmother a moment before she left, and the one thing I noticed was her hands. She couldn't keep her fingers quiet. She had a little handbag, like a pompadour, and she opened it and closed it, and always her fingers were busy. I could see from her fingers the destruction of her whole being.

"Well, after all this, I fell ill. I caught a terrible cold and I had rheumatism, which kept me in bed for some time.

"This rheumatism Mother saw as a result of my obstinately naked legs and the wooden sandals, but our doctor said, 'That is the result of undernourishment,' and he prescribed half a pint of milk every day. Half a pint of milk! Do you know what that meant to us who hadn't seen milk for so long? Please look at us as now constantly hungry. During the winter of 1916-17 our hunger was already so constant that we had had incessant headaches. We were always so tired that the school sessions had to be reduced because the children couldn't be attentive enough to learn anything. But now our hunger was still more and here was this half pint of milk! It was the greatest test of my principles that I can ever remember. The family exclaimed, 'Oh, now you will have milk!' and, being pos-



sessed of the devil about this milk, I only thought, 'Oh, they want to have some of my milk too.'

"It wasn't easy to get this milk. The doctor's prescription had to be signed by the police and had to be permitted by the rationing board. After three weeks I finally got the first milk. Ah, it looked so white, so beautiful! Mother brought it to my bed. It was warm. She said, 'Now you drink all this milk yourself.'

"But Mother, too, as a result of undernourishment, had swollen joints, and I looked at her fingers and I said, 'Won't you drink a bit?' I hoped she would say no. She said, 'No. It is all for you.' And I drank this glass of milk all alone. It tasted wonderful, but I felt so bad about it." Erna's eyes were shadowed with memories.

"Was there this hunger everywhere?" I asked.

"Yes," she said almost harshly.

"Could your father have bought food if he had enough money?" I asked.

"There was, of course, a black market but you had to belong to the very rich people if you wanted to buy enough food there," she answered. "At first we all had a very strong feeling against it. We were willing to sacrifice and to go hungry while our soldiers fought and died and it was considered very unpatriotic to go to the black market. But after a while we no longer refused things bought there. Mrs. Holzman when visiting us always brought some little things, which were however at that time no little things to us but big ones. She came with a few eggs or a bit of white bread and I remember that once I heard Mother say to her, 'If only my husband would give in and let me get a few things for the children,' and Mrs. Holzman replied, 'I'll tell you one thing—maybe we should refuse to buy food that is offered to us behind the backs of the authorities, but I can't see my children go hungry. I am too good a mother. If I can get a bit for them, I will take it.' After that Mother spoke with Father about it, but he still refused.

"But this half pint of milk must have strengthened the

appetites of my whole family. Just at this time Father was offered a hundred pounds of sugar on the black market and Mother said, 'Well, we have milk now and we could make some nice things if we had sugar, too.' So those hundred pounds of sugar were bought, although Father said it cost him a fortune. I don't know how much it really cost. But you see that this bit of milk could really become a matter of importance."

"And then was your milk taken to make cakes, or what?" I asked. I felt by now an interest myself in this milk.

"Pudding!" she exclaimed. "I remember very well the day I got up the first time after my illness. I got up on a Saturday, because Saturday was a day we were allowed to have hot water and the bathroom therefore was warm. On Saturdays we had our suppers in the bathroom. Father put a big wooden plank over the bathtub, and this served as a table. Mother made a very good pudding from my milk and the sugar. It was a wonderful evening. We were warm and had a good pudding—it was like paradise.

"While we were so hungry, Christmas came—Christmas, 1917. On Christmas Day my uncle Eberhard was in Hamburg for a few days, and he called my father to come to the port and meet him. My father went and although we had an invitation in the afternoon, he didn't come home. He didn't come home in the evening or at night. We children were sure that something terrible must have happened to him, and we insisted that Mother call the police. But Mother said she didn't think that anything terrible had happened to him.

"My father came back the next morning, quite blue. He was so angry that he wouldn't even say good morning to us, but just went in to bed. Then, in the afternoon, he told us he had been with Uncle Eberhard in his ship, and he was in the officers' mess. What things he got to eat there—butter, and any meat you wanted, and poultry, and everything we hadn't seen for years! That broke the morale of my father—'These officers—they have everything while the people go hungry,' he declared.

So he decided to go to the black market. He didn't make up his mind immediately. But his political hatred against all this military clique took on a new personal note since he had seen what the officers were eating. Then came January and the news that the potatoes were frozen. Now, it was a very cold winter, and the potatoes were really the only thing the people had left to eat. You know, potatoes are always stored under the earth in straw. For usual winters the straw was deep enough, but this time it was so extremely cold that they got frozen. A large part of the potato stock in Germany was not fit for use. It really was a catastrophe, because there was nothing that could substitute for potatoes. Mother said to Father, 'I have heard the rumors that the potatoes are freezing, but it can't be true, Paul.' Father said, 'I am afraid it is true.' Father just sat there, and he had no courage any more, and there was nothing he could do about it. The only thing we had left to eat in this terrible winter was turnips. Turnips! Maybe when you have them once in a week or once in a month, prepared with fat and nice roast and other good things, they are eatable, but ours were only boiled in water, and only tasted of water.

"On Saturday evening Father said, 'Tomorrow we'll go to the peasants and buy on the black market.' Not one of us thought that we had any longer a moral obligation not to go on the black market. Our hunger was too great to think of morals or patriotism. But we were afraid of the police, because every daily newspaper brought some notice about black marketeers who were arrested and we were terribly afraid. But Father had made up his mind we were to go, and so we were to go.

"Now Mother couldn't be expected to go along—that was no task for her. My eldest sister was Mother's child and she wasn't expected to go. Lotte and I were to go with Father.

"Well, next day we went to the country. We didn't take any rucksack with us because we thought that would be too visible. Father said we would only fill our pockets.

"It was a very chilly day. We got off at a little station. We went along a road until we came to a peasant's home. Then we knocked at the door and a very unfriendly peasant woman came to the door. Well, think of it—we Von Pustaus were not even asked to enter the house! What a humiliating experience! She only asked what we wanted and when she heard that we wanted food she just closed the door before our noses.

"Lotte had always a healthy reaction to everything. She was full of disgust about this behavior. She said very proudly, 'Well, we better go hungry than ask for something here.' I was distraught, but Father said, 'We will find somebody else.'

"Well, we went past a few other houses, then we went to another one, and here the peasants were friendlier. We got half a dozen eggs and a bit of bread. We could have had a dozen eggs, but Father thought they were too expensive. But we later regretted that we hadn't taken a dozen eggs. We got some lard, too, and still a bit more of bread, and then Father thought that for the first day we had enough, and anyhow he had spent all his money.

"So we went back to the station and we got into the compartment. It was full of people, and every one of these people had, quite visibly, rucksacks and packages, or even sacks, with food, and all we had was carefully hidden in the pockets of our coats. My father said, 'The police won't look, we are too many,' and he was right. In fact, the 'black market Sunday' was already too big a problem for the police to manage. The need of the people was too great and nothing could hold them back.

"We ate three of the eggs that evening. Each of us got half an egg—only Father got a whole one. It was wonderful, but Father had to pay very dearly for all this. When we went to the country next Sunday, and the following Sunday, and for many Sundays, indeed, he used to say, 'We go as beggars to the peasants for my good money.'

"The hatred against the peasants grew very strong indeed, a hatred between city and country that was to divide

Germany. I will have to come back to this relation between city and country when I tell you about inflation and depression. But since I have found that many Americans cannot understand why our peasant situation is so different from that of Russia before the revolution, I will say a few words about it now.

"The German peasants, being independent, had no desire to get more land. They had land enough. What they did want was higher prices. As you can see, this is very similar to the present situation in America. But America still produces enough food for her own country. Germany had even in peacetime to import food. The German policy at this point was one of high customs on all kinds of crops in order to defend German agriculture against the competition of the less expensive American wheat. This common interest for the maintenance of customs and higher prices, for which the city has always to pay, really tied the peasants closer with the Junkers, so that we had a front called the 'green front,' which contained both the peasants and the Junkers.

"As I told you, we were cold and we were hungry in this winter of 1917-18. We were 'busy shivering us warm,' as Lotte used to put it, busy with going to the peasants, so busy fighting against hunger and cold that we didn't care much about war and politics. But then, early in 1918, a whole year later than Father had predicted, the separate peace with Russia came with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

"I remember it very well, because, as the peace treaty between us and Russia was finally signed, I went to Father and cried, 'Hurrah, hurrah, peace is here!' But Father angrily shouted at me, 'Oh, keep silent! I can't hear that word any more.' I didn't know what was the matter with him and so I retreated to the kitchen to help Berthe with her work.

"My sisters, on this day of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, were going to a dancing party, so in the evening I was alone with my parents. Father sat there reading the newspaper and he got more and more excited and then he put

his fist on the table and said, 'Now we have to win or we shall be lost!' Mother and I looked at him and wondered what he meant.

"Then he explained. He said that this Brest-Litovsk treaty was outrageous. It took immense territories away from Russia, all the Baltic States, Russian Poland, Finland, and the Ukraine. It is true, we did not formally annex them and instead declared their independence; as we would say today, they became our satellites. But this treaty was, as Father said, not only stupid but a clear challenge from the Kaiser and his clique to the majority of the people who were for peace without annexations. And, indeed, long before the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk the majority in the Parliament—the Social Democrats, the Catholic party, and the Progressive Liberals—had voted for a peace without annexations. Through this vote they wanted to make it clear that they intended to support the Kaiser in a war of defense but that they were not going to support the Kaiser if he were to turn the war of defense into a war of conquest. I do not know whether this majority vote was published in America or elsewhere during the time of war.

"The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, however, would be known all over the world and, as Father said, this treaty meant that the Allies' anti-German propaganda now really could stress the point that the liberal and the progressive forces in Germany were without power. It would silence the liberal forces in other countries, which were for a fair peace with Germany.

"This discovery of liberal forces as opposing the government and existing not only in Germany but in other countries too was very bewildering for me. I first saw an international line, namely, that outside of our country there were not only nations but within the nations there were differences. This I want to emphasize here, because I lost this conception after the Treaty of Versailles. After that I saw again only 'the enemies united against us.'

"As for our own country, Father had already explained to me the problem of majority and minority when I was in

bed with rheumatism and got my half pint of milk. He used to come to my bed after office and tell me everything that was happening. Just then the Russian October Revolution was going on, and I, having always combined the idea of revolution with throwing out some kind of despot, asked my father, 'Why do they make this revolution? They have disposed of the Czar already. Whom do they dispose of now?' Father answered, 'Those who disposed of the Czar are to be disposed of now.' And discussing this still further, Father made a queer statement. He said to me, 'The minority is stronger than the majority.' I couldn't believe that. Well, the minority was, according to all laws, just a minority. He continued, 'We, the people, are the majority and we don't want the war any longer. But does that matter? The minority has more money and therefore more power.'

"This was the first time I heard the words 'we, the people.' I asked Father, 'Do we really belong to the people?' He still answered 'yes.' And this burned into my heart.

"I was at that time reading *Faust*, and thinking of the evil consequences of gold. I proposed to Father that gold be abolished. He, not thinking in terms of the poetic 'gold,' said, 'Well, we could abolish money.' I thought it over—it was rather interesting. And then I said, 'Well, but we should keep a bit of money since we have to eat.' He said, 'Well, I didn't mean it that way. I only mean that money should be distributed in a right and equal way among all.'

"That sounded very good, but I immediately saw another thing. We children got allowances. I, being the youngest, got the lowest amount of allowance, and although I sometimes thought that I did the most work at home and should therefore have more allowance, it was due to my age that I always got less than my sisters. Every attempt I had made to get a distribution of the allowance in a way that seemed right to me always was refused by my father, and it seemed rather impossible to have a right distribution of money. So, using for the first time a word I had

very often heard, I said, 'No. I am a radical. I am for the abolishment of all money.'

"I want to tell you one little thing—a difference between America and us which I have found very interesting. Here in America I was very amazed to find out that the children get paid for the help they do in the household. It never entered the mind of any of the German parents to pay the children for anything they did. I don't know whether the American way is the right way, but it gives you one thing which is good—it gives you a sense of money in its relation to work.

"The allowance we got was only a generosity. The help we gave was only our duty. We depended for everything on our parents and we didn't learn self-assurance because we had to beg for what we wanted.

"But to come back to my story—life at that time was becoming extremely complicated. Not only was it difficult to keep warm and to silence our rumbling stomachs, but there were so many things of which we had never heard before. Think for instance of the Bolsheviks!

"Naturally, none of us knew any Bolshevik, and the Communist party did not yet exist. The 'reddest' man we knew was our rather 'pink' Mr. Holzman. But Mother seemed to know everything about bolshevism. She knew that bolshevism would break down our whole civilization. She knew that bolshevism meant raping women, killing children, and destroying the 'holy home of the family.' In short, she knew all that our newspaper printed about bolshevism.

"We children were somewhat mixed up. That was not only because we were children but still more because of the very confused use of the terms 'Bolshevik' and 'Russian' by the grownups. You never knew what they really meant.

"This confusion seemed at its worst when Mother spoke about 'the price of the peace' we were going to make with Russia. The territories she wanted to take away from Russia remained always the same, only sometimes you 'freed



them from Russian enslavement' while at other times you 'freed them from the Bolshevik terror.'

"Father was not much impressed by the Bolsheviks. He shared the general opinion of that time that the Bolsheviks would not stay in power long. He thought that all this talk about the Bolsheviks was mostly propaganda from our headquarters, in order to cover the real question, namely, the transformation of a war for defense into a war for conquest against the will of the people. Here you can see how our Kaiser and his clique already used the Bolshevik bogymen to deceive the people who were not willing to suffer and die for an imperialist war, a war for conquest.

"Having acquired a healthy distrust of everything the grownups said, we wanted to make up our own minds what bolshevism really was. The only Russian books we had were by Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky being a Russian, we were sure he must be a Bolshevik. I made a discovery in reading *The Idiot*. In the story of *The Idiot*, you may remember, there's a party, a fine noblesse party, and there is a beautiful Chinese vase. 'The Idiot' is always afraid he will push the vase, so he tries to go around it and be as far as possible from it. In the course of the discussion he gets excited. Being excited, and it is always difficult for him to speak for he is always living inside himself more than outside, he comes nearer and nearer and approaches the vase; then he pushes it and the very expensive vase breaks to pieces. I read over this page, and something happened to me. I reread this page, and suddenly I saw a beautiful Chinese vase which Mother had once given me to carry to the kitchen, and I had looked so concentratedly on this vase, instead of looking on my feet, that I fell upon the carpet, and the vase went to pieces.

"Mother had been terribly angry with me and had called me a good-for-nothing. But here was an 'idiot'—a man who had the same thing happen to him—and he was the hero of a whole story. That was just wonderful. Thinking it over once more, I said to myself, 'If Dostoevsky is a Bolshevik, then bolshevism may be dangerous to a vase, but not to

a civilization.' Well, Dostoevsky was not a Bolshevik, as I learned later. But Mother must have believed it since she was very upset when she heard that Lotte and I read such a dangerous book.

"I always seem to forget my sister Hilde! She never talked much. Lotte sometimes used to say, 'She is so arrogant she won't even speak to her own family.' After her confirmation Hilde had been sent to Uncle George, whom Father had called reactionary, you remember, because of his dislike of automobiles. When Hilde came back from his estate she was even more quiet and arrogant. She wanted to study music. Father wouldn't hear of that, and Mother decided that she must go to high school.

"Yes, women's emancipation had become so widespread during the war that many middle-class people wanted their daughters to go to high school too. Mother was one of the first. She spoke with Miss Ritter, our school principal; she helped her to find money and pupils, and so high-school classes were added to our private school.

"Our Miss Ritter announced the creation of this high school with a wonderful speech. I shall always remember this speech, because I had the feeling 'I am present where history is made.' All I longed for was, when I was old enough, to go to this high school, but I hadn't much hope, since I was considered the stupid one in the family.

"Well, Mother was very proud that one of her daughters was now a high-school girl, yet for her the real destiny of women was still marriage. Here we have a great contradiction: the conception of a new world in which women should participate in the economic and the political life but marriage remained in the old pattern. Where does a woman get acquainted with men? According to the old pattern, not through a job or through any participation in the economic and political life of the nation—but through dancing parties. So, although this winter was grim and the war was grim, Mother insisted that Hilde and Lotte had to take dancing lessons."

Erna paused, considered, and then said thoughtfully,

"These new ideas and old patterns will be very much of a problem here in America, too."

I asked this German woman a question: "Would you say women in America are emancipated?"

"This is a matter which I don't understand," she said frankly. "I have discussed it with an American woman and she gave a good explanation. She said, 'The crisis of American women is that we don't know what we are supposed to be.' I think that is very cleverly put.

"Our kind of economy, which uses women only during the war but has no social use for them in peace, cannot settle the question of what the woman is really supposed to be. The home, through machinery, is to a very large degree deprived of the usefulness it had in former days. The women feel this emptiness, especially when the children are old enough to go to school. Looking around, I think that the consequences here are the same as I have seen in Germany. The women store in themselves such an amount of resentment and hatred that I see a very great danger in it.

"The question of women, here, it seems to me, is the same as it is in many other matters. It all hangs closely together with the appearance of democracy—I say 'appearance of democracy,' which here in this country still has many believers. You somehow say to the women, 'It is of your own free will, what you are doing. The decision is up to you.' In fact, the decision is not up to them, because society has brought no solution. It only seems in the range of their own free and democratic will. But there is a discrepancy which they constantly feel, without seeing it face to face, and this makes for greater resentment."

"Does this contribute to the growth of fascism?" I asked.

She replied, "I think that every unsolved problem and unfaced question leads to a resentment which looks for something to fight. The dissatisfied woman is the easy prey."

I said, "Do you feel, in this unsolved problem of womanhood, that the man is also involved? An unhappy woman

always makes also an unhappy man. The two are mutually involved."

Erna von Pustau considered, but not for long. "Yes," she said decisively, "but the man has compensations. He has his business. Then, too, man is the one who earns the money, which is very important in marriage, since he who has the money is master. The man has, in very many instances, a freer, much easier, way to find sex relations, which make up for part of the dissatisfaction. It was one of the reasons for Germany's decline, too, that inflation, and then crisis, didn't give the man satisfaction any more, because he had no work, or his work didn't pay a living. But in a stable society he has still this release which makes it somewhat easier for him than for the woman.

"And one thing is certain: The middle-class woman in Germany went all out for Hitler, just as her husband did. I hate to say this because once I had thought that women were 'the better sex' and when emancipated they would better the world.

"I have the feeling that the women here are in a dangerous mood, too. I have seen more than one woman who, having a vacuum cleaner and a refrigerator and shopping only twice a week, has nothing to do but listen for hours to soap operas and stories on the radio. They begin to yearn for a kind of love and life which can only exist in fiction. The discrepancy between real life and imaginary life becomes unbearable. These women are frustrated and their unhappiness is dangerous."

"It is always the middle-class woman who is dangerous, and if fascism ever comes to us, it is she who will support it, not the working woman who has to go out and work." This I said.

It reminded Erna of something. "By the way, I once lived in a mixed white and colored street in an American city. My neighbor was a white woman, one of the frustrated soap-opera listeners. She was filled up with hatred for the colored people who lived in that street. Every unfulfilled life, every life which has no satisfaction in itself,

creates some kind of hatred against others—here in this country against races because here the race question is stronger than any other. In Europe nationalism is strongest. But, oh, it shouldn't be news to me, since, after the First World War, during inflation and later on during the depression, when Hitler came to power, race hatred became strong in Germany too; the hatred against the Jews."

I asked, "Would you say that in Germany the strongest roots of fascism came out of the women rather than the men?"

"I would be careful—I would be careful—" she replied. "They were not the initiators; they were the followers."

I asked again, "Did the initiators count on this attitude among women? Were they clever enough—though they were men, were they clever enough to know the situation of the women, or was it accidental?"

"You never know what was really clever and what was instinct," she said in her clear fashion. "You know, Hitler had a poor brain but an extremely good instinct for power and where to find power. Have you ever read *Mein Kampf*?"

"Yes."

"I read it in Germany, since we had to know our enemies, and I was amazed at Hitler's instinct for power."

"Which has no connection with brain at all?"

"No. The things he says are almost stupid, but the instinct for power over emotional unrest and the instinct that told him how to play upon these emotions for his own ends—that is extremely interesting."

"Now, let's go back to chronological order," I suggested. "The war wasn't yet over. How did the end of that war come to the German family? Did you know it was coming? Did it come suddenly?"

"The end of the war! It came suddenly, although we had expected it every year, every month, every week, every day, I would say. In the course of the war more than ten million Germans were drafted, ten million husbands, fathers, sons, sweethearts. To have them come home was

in everyone's mind. And the people were cold and hungry and the end of the war would mean the end—so they thought—of all their suffering.

“Why then did the people not stop the war? Here is a problem which may be hard for the Americans to understand. For us, to stop a war in the midst of the war was not only a question of stopping. Our soldiers couldn't just go home; there was no ocean between us and the enemy. Once our front collapsed, the enemy would march into our country. During this Second World War many an American has asked me, ‘Why don't the Germans surrender?’ But they did not see that once the war is started, even if you don't want an offensive war, it is difficult to let the enemy's army come into your country.

“It is true this latter has happened once. The Bolsheviks did just that after the October Revolution; they withdrew from the war and let the German armies march into their country. They did it to prove to the world that they wanted peace. Alas, we Germans were not Bolsheviks! We still had our Kaiser and his clique and they were in power.

“The pressure to force the Kaiser to end the war was constantly growing. But it was always the same question: How could he be forced, without at the same time weakening our strength so much that the enemy armies would break through our front and march into our country?

“There was the question, too, of war credits. These had to be approved by the Parliament. They could be refused and the Kaiser thus be deprived of the means to continue the war. There was a small group of Parliament members who had refused the credits; Karl Liebknecht was the first to do so, others followed. My father had always detested these radicals for their refusal. He used to say, ‘Once in the war, we have to see it through.’

“But now even Father began to wonder whether this refusal had not been right, after all. I remember when in spring 1918 a new war bond drive started, he made up his mind not to buy bonds. Well, every one of these war loan drives came to our school. It would have been hard for us

children if we were to say, 'My father doesn't want to give any more money for the war.' So it was a rather important question for us whether he would give us money for it or not.

"Lotte and I asked him finally and he was very reluctant. Then Hilde intervened by asking him whether he had gone over to the enemies of our country. Father only looked at her—but how he looked!

"Next day he gave us the money saying these words which I will always remember: 'I give you this money so that, after this war is over, you will place the responsibility upon the right people and not upon the wrong people.' These were the words with which he gave us the money for the war loan.

"The workers were more active in their demand for peace. Strikes and demonstrations became widespread. The most militant antiwar leaders, the 'reddest' ones, were imprisoned—Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, to name only the best known. I remember once asking Father, 'Why do the workers strike?' He said, 'They want the end of the war and they don't want to go hungry any more.' And I said, 'That is what we want, too, so why are we against the strike?' And then Father said, 'I, for one, am not against the strike, I am only against the reds.' And I said, 'What is the difference between the reds and the workers?' Said Father, 'The workers are the workers who work, and the reds are the workers who don't work.'

"But to come back to your question as to whether the end of the war came suddenly. When it finally came, it came unexpectedly. Still more unexpected was the defeat. And it was defeat when Ludendorff suddenly declared, 'We can't hold longer than twenty-four hours.'

"It seemed unbelievable that up to the very end we did not expect defeat. Yet remember, our papers were censored, our armies had even in the summer 1918, even up to July and August, still made offensives in the west; small offensives, which, however, made big headlines in the censored newspapers—offensives which were soon

stopped, but that didn't make headlines. Father only gathered the details of our retreats from names of French cities through which our troops marched now in the opposite direction. We were defeated, while our armies still stood deep in enemy countries, while no enemy had entered our country, while war had not been waged on our soil.

"All this together made it possible, years later, for our militarists to build the so-called '*Dolchstoß*' ('stab in the back') legend, namely, that our army had never been defeated—that it was the civilians on the home front who had collapsed and were responsible for the defeat. This legend became a strong and terrible weapon in the hands of the Nazis."

"Let us go back a minute," I said. "How could the military blame the civilians, when it was they themselves who collapsed?"

"It was they who collapsed," she agreed. "As for myself, I can truly say that the realization of defeat is in my memory inseparably connected with the name of that militarist, General Ludendorff. It was not a defeat from without, but from within, from our own military leadership. It came on that day when Ludendorff fled from Germany. How well I remember! We sat at the breakfast table and we heard from the street the cry '*Extrablatt!*' This extra contained the news of Ludendorff's flight. Well, he was one of those 'who had held the flag of honor in his hands' and at this hour of defeat he fled abroad!

"Father cried out, 'This coward!' He stood up and he took our German national flag, which he hadn't hoisted for a long time, and he went out to our front yard and he put it at half-mast. We stood around him; Mother was crying and we felt utterly lost.

"A few days later the Kaiser, too, fled abroad. This flight was the reason why it was easier later on for the militarists to make a new form of reactionary movement, a new counterrevolutionary movement, rather than to make a successful propaganda for the return of the Hohenzollern dynasty."



### III

“THE end of the war was the end of the Kaiserreich and the beginning of the Republic, but years later when it was to the interest of the old ruling clique to turn the table against the Republic and to blame the Republic for defeat, they created the *Dolchstoß* legend. It seemed believable because the German people at home had not seen the military defeat of our army, not to mention the younger generation who had only experienced hunger and starvation but had not seen war. And, moreover, so many things happened together, all at this time, that no one had time to think carefully about the reasons of our defeat in order to get at the truth.

“Let me here tell you about Wilson. There was one important point in Wilson’s message which made many a follower of the German Republic believe in the so-called ‘betrayal by Wilson.’ Here is a quotation from his messages to make clear to you what I mean.

“In his message of October fourteenth are the following sentences: ‘It is within the choice of the German nation to alter it [the ruling power]. This constitutes a condition precedent to peace if peace is to come by the action of the German people themselves.’ It was a direct appeal to the German people.

“This appeal played an enormous part in the overthrowing of the Kaiser’s government and the end of the Hohenzollern dynasty. Up to that time, the majority of the opposition against the Kaiser had no intention of overthrowing the government. What they wanted were reforms,

some kind of constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch would have less power and the Parliament more; a government somewhat like that of the British.

"Wilson's message threw this whole matter wide open. The masses of the people felt a new and fresh wind blow upon this earth. They had not been willing to follow the example of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, but when Wilson spoke, they stood up; they left the factories and their homes; they marched into the street and enforced the creation of the German Republic. Yes, Wilson's name, Wilson's Fourteen Points, were a symbol of democracy, of a just and fair peace for the victors and the vanquished, a symbol of a better world, in which every nation of this world would be disarmed, in which a League of Nations would replace the old wars.

"I need not tell you what became of Wilson and his Fourteen Points. I wanted only to tell you how it came that the followers of the German Republic could feel betrayed by him."

I said, "What you couldn't understand in Germany was that even as your military people can control you, our people controlled us. What happened afterward was against the will of Wilson, and we understood nothing."

"And I will tell you," she replied, "that only here in America I learned how far away we still are from the mutual understanding between nations. When I saw the motion picture *Wilson*, I knew for the first time what happened to Wilson here in his own country. Oh, terrible betrayal! Even those of us who wanted to understand didn't understand what happened. And this, too, became a dangerous weapon in the hands of the militarists and the Nazis. For, later on, they told the German people that Wilson's Fourteen Points had been nothing but a clever trick of propaganda in order to demoralize the German people, a trap to defeat Germany from within; that Wilson had never intended to fulfill his promise, and that the leaders of the Republic had 'played ball' with Wilson, the enemy of our country. This 'Wilson legend' could be believed by

many because the German people never understood what happened to Wilson.

"The masses of the workers and the people had, as I told you, overthrown the dynasty and had enforced the declaration of the Republic. But the old masters, the old reactionaries, and militarists still existed; they were neither arrested nor eliminated.

"It is very easy, with our wisdom of today, to look back at the mistakes of the Republic; it is so easy to say, 'If they had done this or that, fascism would not have come.' It is easy to blame the leaders of the right-wing Social Democrats for their mistakes and their 'betrayal of the revolution,' as the Communists did. But it was because the masses of the German people and the workers were not revolutionary; they were home-loving and law-abiding citizens and all they wanted was peace and a republic. They got both in November, 1918, and this in contrast to Russia, where the war continued after the February Revolution, a fact which deepened and broadened the revolutionary movement until, at last, the Bolsheviki came to power.

"Well, I should not depart so often from my story. But this our world is one world, and only if we learn to understand what happened in other countries, and why it happened, can we learn to understand what might also happen to us.

"I have not seen the German revolution. But my father was quite a revolutionary in those days. He was a new man. How excited he was! The Kaiser, whom he had hated so deeply, was out, the Republic was created, for which his father had fought in vain. Father's whole being radiated a new self-assurance. Now had started the 'age of the common man.' The common man was freed, at last. Father 'freed' himself, too. He gave up his job as a bookkeeper and set his mind upon becoming a free man, a free and independent businessman.

"Yes, those were exciting days. Father came home telling us of the demonstrations, of the people who sang on

the street, enjoying peace and the new times, carrying along with them big signs 'Never Again War.' And they believed it, they really believed that this was the last of all wars. So strong was this belief that even Mother spoke of the new age, the 'age of eternal peace,' that now had begun. How different it is today!

"Father brought many leaflets home, and they all promised equality and liberty. Lotte and I read them with enthusiasm. But Mother forbade her children to leave home in those days of unrest and Lotte sighed, 'Nice revolution! They promise liberty but what do we get out of it? Nothing but home arrest!'

"The revolution had started with a revolt in our navy. You know, on ships the crew's canteen and the officers' mess are closer together than anywhere else. So the marines could see with their own eyes what Father once had seen with his own eyes, all the abundant food their officers got while they themselves were hungry.

"The first 'counterrevolutionary' I met was Uncle Eberhard. He appeared without his epaulets. My sister Lotte immediately cried, 'Oh, your epaulets are torn off! Who did it? The revolutionaries?'

"Uncle Eberhard just smiled. He didn't say anything and he let us stay in suspense until we were all seated in the dining room and Mother had served him a drink. Then he said, 'Nobody has torn off my epaulets; I did it myself.'

"We were amazed. We couldn't understand what he meant. Then Hilde said, 'But didn't you fight for your honor?' And Uncle Eberhard said, 'My dear, you fight for honor with an officer, but not with a private.'

"While we were still in the dining room, Father came home. His first question, too, was 'Who has torn off your epaulets?' Uncle Eberhard repeated, 'I did it myself,' and Father said with biting irony, 'All that's lacking now is to have you confess that you side with the revolution.'

"To this Uncle Eberhard said, 'And that is exactly what I mean to state,' and he continued, 'For the time being, I

think it wise to howl with the wolves,' meaning that he would go with those in power though secretly he detested them. And Father said, 'So that's the way you try to save your skin when you can't flee abroad!' He was outraged, but his brother just didn't care. In his loud and arrogant voice, which I hated so much, he told us that he was on his way to a workers' meeting and he said, 'I have a wonderful slogan. If a red shouts aloud, I'll just say, "What do you want? We all are human beings. We have all a hole where our food goes in and one where it comes out; so you see we are all alike, we all belong together." The laughter is so loud that the leftist rioters can't be heard any longer.'

"Well, it is not a nice story and it was the first time we had heard such language. It was the last time I saw my uncle Eberhard, but he never changed. The last time I heard of him was after Hitler had come to power. Uncle Eberhard was one of the members of a naval commission which went to Japan to study the Japanese Navy, and to advise them how to build up their navy for the Second World War.

"Yes, he remained always the same aggressive militarist; but something new had been added—a deeper contempt and hatred against the people of his own country.

"The people! It reminds me of our maid Berthe, the faithful Catholic. She became quite a revolutionary, too; she conquered the house entrance for *Herrschaften*!

"I told you how upset she had been when we had moved into this new apartment where she had always to enter through the servants' entrance. Now she went to Mother and said, 'I want the key for the front door.' Mother gave her the key. When she came through the house door she had a fight. The doorkeeper wanted to send her to the back, but she said, 'Our government wants us to go through this door, and our government is behind me.' This was what freedom meant to her.

"You know, this action of Berthe started us thinking,

and not only because it happened in our home. The slogans of the leaflets became real and it made Berthe, whom we had always considered to be nothing but 'our Berthe,' into an important person and we looked at her with new respect. I remember one night Lotte and I discussed Berthe. Never before had we given it much thought that she had to live in a cellar where the sun could not enter while we lived in big bright rooms. Lotte said, 'When you come to think of it, this new social conscience of which the newspapers write so much is at the bottom only a very bad conscience.'

"But Berthe surprised us still more. She had been with us for eleven years and had never asked for more than one evening weekly off and every second Sunday afternoon and evening. But now she took every evening off.

"Well, one morning, while we were sitting at the breakfast table, Berthe came in with a pot of coffee and with an eye red and swollen, and it looked just terrible. We asked, 'What has happened to your eye? Have you been beaten up by the plebs?' That was what we called the reds.

"But Berthe just stood there, beaming and holding the coffeepot in her hands. Then she flushed and said, 'I became engaged to be married yesterday night.'

"At first we only looked at her in amazement, then we cried, 'Oh, how exciting,' and 'Who is he,' and we congratulated her.

"But Mother said angrily, 'Put the coffeepot down and go to the kitchen immediately. I will see you later.'

"When Berthe was gone, Mother said, 'She never got this eye at a Catholic meeting. Wherever she got this eye she found this fiancé, and he can't be a good man.' And then she suddenly began to cry and cry and cry; I suppose she needed to let off all her tension and her fear of this revolution with its events which she didn't understand. But Father just couldn't stand tears and he left in a fury.

"But Mother was right, after all. Berthe had not met her fiancé at a Catholic meeting and he was a red."

"And had he beaten her?" I asked, deeply interested in this strange betrothal.

Erna replied, laughing, "No. I do not remember how she got her bad eye but he certainly hadn't beaten her. You should have seen this fiancé as I saw him when he first came into our house. A small thin man, very shy and quite obviously feeling extremely uncomfortable—you know, he had to ask mother's permission to marry Berthe! He must have had a hard time then, because I can imagine what Mother told him. She was against the marriage because this man had tuberculosis from gas poisoning at the front. Mother had said, 'How dare he marry? How dare he tie a healthy woman to his misery?' And she called him irresponsible. Think of that! A soldier, one of the 'heroes' who had suffered and sacrificed for us during the war; now only a sick gas-poisoned fellow who dared to marry the woman he loved. Oh, I tell you, it was farewell to all the beautiful love of which I had read in books and poems.

"Well, Berthe married him anyway. But, as Mother had predicted, she became 'tied to the misery' of her husband, who only got a small invalid veteran's pension—"Too small to live on, but too big to let us die," as many veterans used to say. He was constantly ill and unable to work and Berthe had to work hard in order to make a living for both of them. Mother always used to say, 'I told her so,' and this was meant as a warning to her daughters that they, too, would become unhappy some day if they didn't listen to her advice.

"Well, I could go on and on telling you stories of what happened in our house during the days of the revolution. But let us not forget that the old reactionary clique, although checked for the time being, still existed, and that to the old reactionary clique came a new group. At that time we called them the counterrevolutionaries, later on their kind became known all over the world as the National Socialists.

"Let me speak of them first. They did not wear the black uniforms of Hitler's elite guard. The National So-

cialist party was not yet created. But they were to join them later. And I met them and I saw them first in our home. These were the sons of the wealthy middle class, of the good families.

"This terrible decay of our good families, this slow decay of more than one decade, destroyed our whole culture and all the ethical values which we had cherished and which had been so dear to us. Had I seen only my uncle Eberhard, I might have said to myself, 'Well, that is the old generation, they cannot be changed.' But I saw this decay in my own generation, in the sons of the good families, who had been soldiers, who had become officers, and who now came home. No, people are not the same after a war. War is 'kill or be killed,' and it leaves its scars on them. Yet they might have readjusted themselves had all the misery stopped when the war stopped. But those youngsters came back to homes which were no longer the homes they remembered and they came back to a world in which their privileges were threatened.

"But let us not jump ahead of the story. Let us come to the story of the sons of the good Hamburg families who came to our home as dancing partners for us.

"Mother gave a dancing party for my sisters at the end of February, 1919! Think of it! A dancing party during this time of unrest, and Father without a job or any other kind of income! He, naturally, protested, but of what use was his protest when Mother paid for the party out of her pocketbook? But he took his revenge. On the evening before the party, after a day in which Mother had been so busy that she didn't know any longer where her head was, Father decided to sole our shoes himself. You know, leather was hard to get but Father had, by chance, got a large piece of leather. It was so precious he would never have trusted it to a shoemaker; he was certain that only he himself knew how to cut out the smallest pieces just large enough to cover the holes.

"Well, he hammered and hammered in the small room where we all were gathered because of the coal shortage,



until Mother complained, 'Please, stop it! Do you have to do it just this evening?' Father replied, 'All the money you spend is in vain. Those youngsters you have invited for the party have just come home from war. They have to start from the beginning and can't yet provide for a wife.'

"This we children heard and this, too, was a farewell to the old times of romance and it ended the old way of 'women falling in love.' Now it was 'women are on the market,' the more on the market since two million German men had been killed during the war. The oversupply of women was immense. In fact, the sons of good families got so many invitations that they could hardly cope with the situation.

"Yes, the veil was down here, too. The culture in which girls can live in a romantic twilight, in which they fall in love, dancing to the sound of the violin with its touching music, was gone. Too many women on the market was a sign of our decay, too. It affected the daughters of the good families, it took from us the innocence of the older generation. We could cry about it, we could revolt against it, but there was no way of escaping it.

"But Mother tried to fight. Taking the façade for the real thing, she hoped that the good old times would come back if only she followed the old pattern faithfully. At the dancing party she wanted everything to be as it used to be.

"Alas, the first thing which could not be as it had been was that the neighborhood must not see that the Von Pustaus were having a dancing party. Being still afraid that the plebs might come to our quiet district, Mother decided that the windows had to be covered with heavy curtains, so that no light could be seen from the street. The violin players and the pianist whom my mother wanted Hilde refused to have, saying, 'You never know who is a red and who not!' So a gramophone was rented. This gramophone was the reason why I was permitted to come to the party because, you see, it was not an electrical gramophone but one which had to be wound, and that was what I was supposed to do.

"Well, I wound it carefully and dutifully, all the while watching the dancing party. And there were among them the son of a senator, the son of a well-established German East Asia merchant, and the son of a doctor. They all looked utterly serious while they danced. Then they made a pause. Sandwiches and wine were served. One of the young men, a lawyer's son, brought me something to eat and drink, too. I liked him better than the others—he had such a funny nose and he looked as if he had some sense of humor. Now while we stood there the senator's son went to the piano and played songs and others joined in singing. One of the songs ran thus:

'Since when does my grandma play the trumpet—  
Since when does my grandma play the trumpet?  
The old lady never did it before!'

I was shocked. The lawyer's son said, 'You don't seem to like this song.' I said, 'No, because I love my grandmother.' He looked disconcerted and they began another song.

'Augusta has to make grenades,  
While Wilhelm stands in line for butter.'

"Well, this song at least had some humor, but then came still another,

'There is a corpse  
Swimming in the Landwehr Canal.  
Please give her to me—  
But don't pet her too much!'

"This song really disgusted me and this must have shown in my face for the young man at my side said, 'Don't take it so tragically. It was composed for a woman who has just been killed—Rosa Luxemburg.' It was the first time I had heard her name. 'A woman has been killed?' I exclaimed. He said, 'Oh, she was only a Bolshevik.'

"Well, the dancing started anew and I had to wind up the gramophone again. But I looked at these young men

with new eyes. I did not know who Rosa Luxemburg was but she had been killed and here were the sons of good families, singing cynical songs even about her defenseless corpse! Maybe Mother, who had locked the windows against the plebs, had let them in through the house door without even knowing whom she had let in. Well, she would not learn it either since Lotte had forbidden her to stay at the party because that would look so old-fashioned. Only many years later did I learn that Rosa Luxemburg had been also a Jew."

"Had there been any sign of anti-Semitic violence?" I asked.

"None, so far as I knew," Erna said soberly.

"Had you heard talk?" I asked again.

"Maybe here and there," she said. "But I can't remember, because, you know, at that time the fight was a clear-cut political one. Rosa Luxemburg had been murdered because she was a revolutionary; so had Karl Liebknecht, who was not a Jew. People were murdered because they were 'Bolsheviks' or 'Communists' or 'Fatherland traitors' but not yet just because they were Jews.

"We will come to the question of anti-Semitism time and again and we will see it develop.

"But let me explain the Jewish problem in Germany. It is very different from America's race question. The Jewish population in Germany was one per cent of the population and the only important race minority we had. Under the Kaiserreich, there were restrictions on them. For instance, in the Prussian Army no Jew became an officer of high degree. There were restrictions in the administration of the government, too, and at the university they usually became professors only when they were christened.

"The Weimar Republic, however, gave to the Jews absolute equality. We had many Jewish ministers—Hilferding, who was for years finance minister, and Rathenau, who was minister for foreign affairs, to name only two of the best known. At the universities, Jews became professors even if they were not christened.

"And let me tell you another thing: Coming to this country, one of the most bewildering things to many like me is that here we found race consciousness and a race discrimination which we immediately identified with fascism, because with us fascism created it. Take, for instance, the restricted areas, restricted hotels, where Jews are not permitted. I remember—it must have been in 1930 or 1931—that two small German islands in the North Sea where people went for vacations suddenly declared that they would exclude Jewish guests. There was a real storm of protest through the whole country about this. Every leftist, every democratic, even many conservative newspapers protested and called it 'shameless.' Remember, this was the year 1930 or 1931, when Hitler was already strong and doing everything he could to make the whole German people hate the Jews. Things like restricted areas, restricted hotels, just did not exist before Hitler came to power.

"When we came to America it was even bewildering that we saw restricted hotels, and no fascism. But here are many races, and here is race consciousness. Here you have 'Gentiles' and 'Jews.' When Hitler began to speak of 'Aryans,' a term which up to that time I only knew out of the science of ethnology, I found it extremely funny. But the whole question of anti-Semitism was in Germany closely connected with the struggle of pro and contra the Republic. The Republic was pro-Semitic, Hitler was therefore anti-Semitic. 'Pro-Semitism' was defeated when the Republic was defeated, and with it. Only after Hitler came to power did the violent anti-Semitism begin—first with an economic boycott and shortly before the beginning of the war with elimination."

I had a question.

"Well, now, Hitler couldn't have made something that was entirely new. There must have been something in the forgotten, subconscious memories of Germany which he was so clever as to know was there and to appeal to, just as in this country the clever fascist leader will appeal

not only to anti-Semitic feeling, but primarily to the color prejudice."

"Yes, there was a certain anti-Semitic feeling among us, perhaps, especially among the middle-class people. The Jews in Germany were middle-class and well-to-do and therefore competitors. There were hardly any Jewish workers, so anti-Semitism was not among the workers. But the race issue really came to the foreground when inflation came. It came with another legend, another lie, the lie that the Jews were the 'guilty ones' for inflation. Yes, during inflation the really guilty ones could no longer blame war and the Allies for the misery of the people and so they used anti-Semitism to deceive the people.

"Well, I have shown you many kinds of people, I have given you a picture of a Germany that was no longer 'united in war' but 'deeply split in peace.' I want, however, to show you one of the old pro-Kaiser group, too. This one was a minister of our little neighborhood church. Mother went there with us on the day when Armistice was signed. The minister took the text for his sermon from the Bible, 'For when they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.'

"The whole sermon was a militant speech against the enemies from without and the enemies from within. But he was much milder against the enemies from without than against the enemies from within; without his naming any names we knew, naturally, that the reds were the enemies from within.

"But while he prayed to God to give wisdom to our enemies from without so that they might give us a fair and just peace, he said that the enemies from within were devils and were destroying our whole culture and civilization and Christianity, and that it was our duty to stand up against them.

"He ended his prayer by adding that as a nation we had abandoned our Kaiser in his days of danger. He ignored the fact that the Kaiser had abandoned his people—which was really a queer way of looking at things!

"On our way home we argued about the sermon. Mother and Hilde were deeply impressed by it, and Mother insisted that all in all we really had been 'ungrateful' toward our Kaiser. I did not agree with her, nor, by the way, did I agree with Miss Ritter, our school director. She just couldn't make up her mind whether to take the Kaiser's picture off its place of honor on the wall above the desk from which Miss Ritter used to make her speeches and the minister used to pray. She made a very touching speech about the Kaiser, saying, 'He was our Kaiser and we followed him. It is too early to judge justly, and those who condemn him now are throwing stones upon themselves, too. That is the reason why I cannot make up my mind to take the Kaiser's picture off the wall.'

"Well, I, too, did not like those who condemned everything of the past. Still, I thought it wrong to leave the Kaiser's picture in the place of honor in a school of our new republic. I dared to make a remark about this to my class, and from then on I was considered red. I told Mother so on my way home from church, but she still insisted that we were ungrateful. This worried me since I did not like to be called ungrateful. So, after we arrived home, I went to my desk and I wrote down in my diary, 'Everybody says that we are ungrateful to the Kaiser, but we are not ungrateful to him. It is only that so many greater things are at stake that the person as an individual doesn't count any longer. And if the new world which is to come is what Schiller dreamed of, human rights and equality and justice, it is better than the old, and we are thus not unfaithful to the Kaiser but faithful to the greater ideals.'

"Well, Father came home in the evening with the Armistice conditions and the realization of our defeat was brought back to us. For me personally, the worst condition of the Armistice was that the Rhineland was to be occupied by the Allied armies, or, as I put it in my excitement, 'Now Grandmother is occupied.' As you know, Grandmother lived in the Rhineland.

"Another condition of this armistice was that the blockade was to remain. The British insisted on this. I must say, however, that the Americans very soon began to send ships with food—not many, but enough for a sign of good will. Yet the hunger was still extremely great and the cold as bad as ever."

"How did this hunger affect your family?" I asked.

"I will tell you a very funny story," she replied. "A few days after it became known that the blockade would be maintained, Father came home with—a live goose. He said, 'Well, it doesn't look as if we will have much to eat during this winter, so we will fatten this goose and we will have something at Christmas.' So we had the goose on our porch for weeks feeding it and having protests from the neighbors because of the noise it made.

"The hunger was still great even though the food situation eased a bit when some of the Army supplies were given to the civilians. Rationing was naturally continued and we were bitter against the British for maintaining the blockade even after the Armistice.

"Yet, it was only an armistice and there was still hope that the peace would be a fair and just peace, according to Wilson's Fourteen Points. But between the Armistice and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles a few months later we realized the kind of peace that was to come. And here we have to come back to Wilson once again.

"Wilson, as you know, had proposed a League of Nations, of all nations. The League of Nations which was created, however, excluded Germany under the pretext that the whole German people were guilty and responsible for the war and not only the old ruling power which the German people had by now rejected.

"When I first heard it said that the whole German people were guilty of the war, I, with all my fifteen years, could not believe it. We, the people; Father and Lotte, Grandmother and I, and Berthe; the enemy propaganda insisted that we all were guilty for the war! I think that during the whole war I had not felt so bitter against the enemy as I

did then. For a long time to come I saw them united against us.

"Yes, Germany was excluded from the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles was signed by the Allies in the name of the League of Nations. For us, it was a league of the victors united against the vanquished.

"Well, we had expected Alsace-Lorraine to go back to France, we had expected the annulment of the German-Russian Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; we had expected the British to take over our navy and our colonies. But there were other things which we had not expected which added something new to history. Wilson had proposed the disarmament of all nations; it was now clear that Germany would be disarmed while her neighbors remained armed. This had never been done before. We had had wars for centuries, but we never had had the disarming of the vanquished. I must say, however, that at that time the masses of the German people did not care much about it; they were only too glad to get rid of all militarism and, above all, of the compulsory military draft. But this whole question came to life later, when, in the midst of peace, the Allies marched into and occupied the Ruhr. Then the militarists said, 'There—you see what happens to a defenseless nation!' It made the pacifist movement in Germany come to a deadlock.

"Then there were the reparations. Reparations as such had always been asked of the defeated nation and that 'the vanquished had to pay for the war' was nothing new. New, however, was it that the amount of reparations was not fixed, that fresh claims could be added at any time, that we thus were constantly 'at the mercy of the enemy,' as Mother used to put it.

"Well, as you can see, our German republic got a very different peace than the one Wilson had offered to the Kaiser. It was Mother who asked, 'But what about Wilson? Did he really agree to all of this?' And it was Father who answered, with sarcasm, 'You seem to think that the other nations are better than we are.'



"I want to stress one more thing. I loved my father, I adored him. Yet sometimes I hated him very deeply. I hated him when he spoke of his conception of the world, which, according to him, was ruled by power and power alone; I hated him when he laughed at all such beautiful terms as justice, equality, liberty, freedom. But the conditions of peace seemed to prove him right, and I want to make my conscience clear on this point. Within the conception of power politics the Treaty of Versailles was justified; but for those of us who wanted something new and better there was no moral leadership in it. And we did not know, as I said, Wilson's position and how he was isolated in his own country—"

I felt impelled to speak. "I must say, in defense of the American people, who also need some defense at this point, that we too were betrayed by the same power politics which betrayed the German people. Our people, if they could have known how the German people felt, as you have described it, would have felt the same. But, you see, we had no sources of information except what these men who were engaged in power politics chose to tell us. So we were misled by the information which we had, which was entirely contradictory to the truth of the German people. And we were taught and told that these terms were necessary. And at that time American people believed that all German people were like the militarists.

"It was a betrayal of the people of both countries by the militarists and the power-minded people. And when Wilson tried to go direct to our people, as you know he did, to appeal to them against these power politics, it was already too late—he was old and broken. And our people never came to an understanding of the facts—never! And today they still have no understanding of what actually happened. So we must consider that this was not only a betrayal of the German people, but it was also a betrayal of the American people, which resulted in the Second World War."

She said, "Yes, that is quite true. And it belongs to this

fight that is going on still today and will, I think, for a long time to come. I want to stress, however, that we had some understanding of it, not so much of what was going on in America, but what was going on in England and France. We saw closer to us the western European Allies, where the power was not within the leftist or progressive circles, but in the military hands of Foch, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and so on. And there was some explaining that America was not strong enough to withstand the French and British demands."

I had to speak again. "Of course, as you know, we were strong enough actually, but we were too ignorant. We didn't know what was going on. We didn't understand the European situation at all."

"And I now understand how it could happen," she replied. "But you have to see it from both sides to understand it.

"Let us go back again to the Republic, because I have to tell you why Mother, who had been for the Kaiser so long, was now for the Republic! The Republic gave equality to women and the right to vote. Mother beamed, and looked important when she went to cast her vote for the First National Assembly, which was to set up a constitution for the Republic. It was not easy to imagine Mother voting for the liberal Democratic party, this same Mother who, when the Social Democrat Ebert, a former saddler, had become president of our republic, had said in disgust, 'A saddler as our president! Really, Germany can't sink any lower.' But she actually voted for the Democratic party, that bourgeois party which had from the very beginning gone all out for women's emancipation.

"I do not usually give figures in our story, but here I want to make an exception. I want to give you the figures of the votes in this election—I have no memory for figures and I had to write them down—to show you how strong the democratic forces were at that time. By and large, the pro-Republic parties were the Social Democrats with 37.9 per cent of the votes, the Catholic Centrum party

with 19.7 per cent, the Democratic party with 18.6 per cent, and the Independent Socialist party with 7.6 per cent, altogether 83.9 per cent. The National Socialist party did not exist, and the Communist party had not yet candidates of its own.

"Yes, the overwhelming majority of the people were for the Republic. It would not be easy to defeat it. It needed inflation, depression, and an utterly desperate people and the whole terror of Hitler's Storm Troops to end the Republic. And even then, even when my own father voted for Hitler, he used the same words which he used when he voted for the Social Democrats at the elections for the First National Assembly. 'I gave them a chance, this time,' he said, not knowing that once he had given the Nazis a chance he would be the prisoner of his choice. He always thought that he could vote them out if he didn't want them any longer, and he did not realize that even his vote would be taken away and he wouldn't be able to get rid of them.

"Well, Mother voted for the first time in her life. I became a member of a parliament; our school parliament. One of our teachers had had the idea of creating a school parliament to teach us girls how to use democracy. So our delegates were elected. I was one of the delegates. Oh, was I happy about that! From the five older classes, ten delegates came together during the last regular school hour. We had been pupils, now we were delegates. We found ourselves a bit funny in this new role we had to play and we just didn't know what to do.

"The teacher took some papers out of her desk and said, 'First we have to make a constitution.' We made a wonderful constitution; there had to be a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a secretary, and we had the right to make all kinds of proposals. Then there was one clause in this constitution that proposals accepted could be brought before the teachers' assembly. The teachers' assembly up to now had been held without any pupil ever going there.

Now we could make proposals to it. That was really revolutionary!

"This first meeting was held during the regular school hours. The meeting the next afternoon was to be in our free time, and there we had to come with proposals. I went home terribly excited. The question now was, what should we propose? My mother told me that in her women's committee they had thought that in the school we should learn how the constitutions of other countries worked. But I had an idea of my own. So in the afternoon I went into the garden, where I usually went when I wanted to think. I could always think well while working in the garden. I thought of Grandmother and her daughter-in-law, and of the Catholic pupils in our school who were excluded from so many things. You know, we had Protestant lessons in our school, and we had a religious meeting every week, and the Catholics did not participate. So they had a somewhat secluded position in our Protestant school. Now, I went to my desk and began to write a proposal that it would be good to have common religious lessons in the school, that we should learn about every religion and compare them. My conception was that there is one God in this world, Whom none sees right, and every religion is but part of Him.

"So with this proposal I went into the parliament. The first disillusion was that now that we had to sacrifice some of our free time for this parliament, not ten delegates were there, but only seven. Three of the oldest ones did not come. The younger ones were in the majority, and they had wonderful proposals. They had proposals of abolishing the rule of wearing aprons; it should be forbidden to punish by putting a girl into the corner of the room—that was a strong punishment; and the book in which bad marks were given for your behavior should be abolished.

"Well, after the young pupils had made all their proposals, which were accepted, I asked for the floor and made my proposal. Immediately I saw that they were frightened. Two of the older pupils were simply angry, and one rose

and said, 'You are a red. We will not tolerate that in our school.' And I, trying to be quiet, although this was a challenge, said, 'I am not a red, because the reds are against religion and I am not against religion.'

"Well, our debate became so loud that our teacher thought it wiser to postpone the assembly until the next week.

"The new assembly never met. The older ones were against the whole thing—partly because they did not want to sacrifice their free time, and partly because they were against my proposal, insisting that I was carrying politics into the school. You know, I found out later that this attitude is very typical. To have new ideas was always called 'politics,' while clinging to the old things, as, for instance, leaving the Kaiser's picture in its place of honor, was never considered politics! But I did not realize this at that time. When I complained to Father about the failure of our parliament he said, 'Well, a parliament has only as much strength as the members are willing to give it.'

"Our real national assembly in the meantime met in Weimar, the city of Goethe and Schiller. We were proud of this 'Republic of Weimar,' and I think we had a right to be, because Weimar was a good symbol and the forces of the Republic were full of good will to live up to the best of our culture.

"Maybe there was even too much good will. The Republic gave freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of worship. It is said so often that Germans don't know democracy, don't know freedom of speech. We had such freedom. Perhaps we had too much freedom. We gave it to the wrong side, too. There were equality, justice, liberty—all beautiful words—and there was a sincere and real wish for peaceful understanding with other nations.

"But already at the National Assembly it became evident that the forces of the Republic, although in the majority, were not united against the reactionary group. The same mistakes that defeated the old revolution of 1848 now repeated themselves. The well-to-do, the middle class, al-

though they wanted to check the power of the reactionary group, the old Junker clique and big business, did not want to oust them. They wanted to keep them, in order to check the workers. It was a dangerous game; it paralyzed the Republic from its very beginning. True, they thought they would master the game. They had not learned their lesson—the lesson, namely, that you have to go with the workers or else surrender democracy to the reactionaries eventually.

“This game, as I said, began immediately. It showed in every debate in the Parliament, in all the concessions that were made to the reactionaries. I remember one debate, which stirred up the whole people, about the new national flag for the Republic. The reactionaries immediately protested against a new flag and new colors. In the end, a compromise was made. A new flag was given to the Republic, while Army, Navy, and merchant marine were to show the old colors, at least in one corner of the new flag. This showed, even in our national flag, that the old forces were still alive and that they held on to their foothold, be it only a corner of our flag.

“The question of the new flag was one in which the whole nation participated, debating it hotly. Yet, by and large, the people began to care less and less about politics after the months of revolutionary excitement were over. They had elected their delegates, whose business it was to ‘make politics.’ All the people wanted now was to have ‘normalcy’ come back, the times in which you can live peacefully, have a job, and earn a decent living. It is the same all over the world. All the people want, all they hope for, is to work and earn a living. The German people expected the Republic of Weimar to bring back ‘normalcy.’

## IV

**I**T SOUNDS strange to me now to hear the word 'normalcy.' It seems stranger to me, looking back on all that has happened, to remember that we Germans really believed after the First World War that normalcy would come back. Yet the people believed it. After each new event that uprooted them, they settled down again until the next event came.

"People said, 'Well, after the war there is still unrest, but then normalcy will come.' They settled down, they made their plans for their lives. Then came political unrest to throw them off. Then came a short time of quiet and they had their hopes and their plans once more. Then came inflation. Then came again the time of stabilization. They settled down and had their hopes again, and began a new life. Then came the crisis. And then they were desperate. Then they really hoped that by voting for another form of government they could come back to normal life again.

"You can put it in this short sentence—people are always hoping to get back to their normal life, to their normal hopes, but this time their hopes failed.

"Then came Hitler, and then came the war, and now comes this hopeless situation of Europe. Do you see now that it was not one shock, but how it happened time and again?"

"These shocks, however, don't come as thunderstorms come, out of the heaven," I observed. "They are the result of causes in the people themselves."

"Yes, they are," she agreed. "And we have to speak of

the causes. But I wanted to show you only the great line, the background of the mass of the people, who are at heart always unpolitical. All they want is to live, and only if they cannot find how to live do they become political. The masses of the people do not care for politics normally, they are not educated for politics, thus they did not see through the forces that finally turned against them, too.

"At this time while people were trying to settle down, prices were going up and money values therefore were going down. We called it 'inflation,' just as you do here, and we thought it was only the aftermath of the war and that soon money and prices would be 'normal' again. When a thing cost double what it had before the war, we said, 'Life is really getting expensive.' When the same thing cost ten times what it had, we said, 'It can't go on longer. It must stop.'

"Sometimes it did stop for a few days or even for a week, and then it went on again until at last the mark of the good old times, which had been based on gold values, was worth a billion marks of these new times. By that time we had long ceased thinking. Life was no longer merely becoming expensive—life had become sheer madness.

"It was at the beginning of inflation when we still said, 'Life is really getting expensive,' that Uncle Richard, Grandmother's younger son, who had come back from South America to fulfill his duty and be a hero, visited us in Hamburg. He discussed with my parents what to do about Grandmother's factory. It had been closed for a long time, she had used much of her capital, and now the widow of her oldest son asked for her share in the factory.

"Father was against reopening—he was for selling the factory. But Grandmother refused to sell. She insisted that her second son take over the factory. She said she would rather sell the houses and give her daughter-in-law the money. As she saw it, the factory had been the source of wealth and in keeping it her children could earn enough money to buy houses again, just as she and her husband had done.



"Uncle Richard tried to get a loan, in order to open the factory, as many of his friends in the Rhineland advised him to do, for the occupation forces had started buying and so business might begin. But he couldn't get a loan. Hamburg merchants had enough troubles, and the overseas trade was still poor, and it did not look as if Grandmother was going to be able to keep her factory. But Mother did not want to sell it, either, for she hoped to get again interest on her investments in it, and so she found a solution. Some friends of hers had a troublesome son and they wanted to send him abroad, and to provide him a livelihood they were willing to buy Uncle Richard's ranch in South America. So, the ranch was sold to Mother's friend on the basis of German marks. Only a small part of the sum was paid in cash, the greater part to be paid when the son arrived in South America and took possession.

"Everything looked really good. Uncle Richard went home to Grandmother, bringing her the good news that the factory was to run again. He would start with the old machines and buy new, modern ones when the greater part of his money was paid. Mother was eagerly looking forward to have her interest paid to her once more and Grandmother didn't even have to sell her houses! She had, in the meantime, got money, too. A friend of her late husband had given her money as mortgage for her houses. This friend was a Dutchman and the money was given to her in Dutch money.

"The next to settle down was Father. He had looked around not just for a job but for a 'suitable occupation,' as he used to say. He wanted to be a free man, he wanted to be his own boss. But his savings were small and so it was not so easy to find a 'suitable occupation.'

"His little savings shrank more and more and Mother, who was in a real wave of new self-consciousness after having voted for the first time and after having arranged this business of her brother so beautifully, thought she would take Father's situation in her hands, too. She asked Mrs. Holzman for advice. Indeed, she believed Jews were better

in business affairs than non-Jews. She said, "They know about business. We have honor and we are heroes, but we are not merchants." I have always considered this the first sign of anti-Semitism in our family.

"So Mother spoke to Mrs. Holzman about Father and she was ready to help. She spoke to her husband, and they offered several chances to Father with a Jewish partner. One day Mrs. Holzman called and said, 'I have a wonderful thing for you, please come and hear!' Mr. Holzman proposed to Father a fish import and export business. This fish business had connections with Switzerland, and he said, 'It is a good thing since you would earn part of your money in Swiss francs—it would make you independent of the fate of the German mark!' My father immediately saw that this was good business, in fact much better than he had hoped for. You see, German money was not only going down because the prices were going up, but the mark was going down, too. Here in America, you have the prices going up, but at the same time the American dollar is stable. When the First World War started, one dollar equaled four and two-tenths marks; at the end of inflation one dollar equaled four thousand marks!

"Well, I must make it clear, since I have to come back to it time and again. We Germans looked, for years, at the dollar exchange in the newspaper. We used to say, 'The dollar goes up, again,' while in reality the dollar remained stable but our mark was falling. It seems a funny way of expressing it. But, you see, we could hardly say that our mark was falling, since, in figures, it was constantly going up and up and up, and so did the prices, and this was much more visible than the realization that the value of our money was going down. It sounds confusing, doesn't it? But this confusion belongs to inflation, is inseparably connected with it, and was one of the reasons why the people gave up thinking things out. It all seemed just madness and it made the people mad.

"But now you can see why it was good business to become 'independent from the fate of the German mark.'

Swiss money was as stable as the American dollar and although Father was far from thinking that our money would sink down so low, he thought it wise to do business in foreign money.

"Mother was a bit concerned about fish—a Von Pustau and fish! But, as it happened, the partner was a 'Von,' too. This partner had not much money but his great asset was his relations in Switzerland. Mr. Holzman promised to give some capital. My mother, who had still large capital in the bank, promised to give some, too."

"Did she keep her money separate from your father?" I asked.

"Yes, they had a legal separation of their funds," Erna replied.

"Was that usual in Germany?" I asked.

"I grew up thinking it usual," she said, "but later on I have found that not so many families had it. My grandmother insisted on it at the very first, for she always thought my father an adventurer.

"The business now proposed to my father consisted of two houses, a small factory for smoking fish, and an office. My mother took over the two houses; my father, with his savings and capital from Mr. Holzman, took over the factory and the business. Mr. Holzman, making this contract, put a gold clause in it. Mother immediately said she had never heard of such a thing. Father said, 'Well, you have never lived in a time when money is so insecure and the only thing that is really secure is gold. So, as Mr. Holzman helps me to a business which deals with foreign *valuta*, he is quite justified in asking for a gold standard.'

"Gold was as stable in value as the foreign *valuta*, so the gold mark was a stable mark, while the paper mark was running down. This is so complicated that one of the reasons why all this could happen was that the German people never understood what really was going on.

"We visited the houses and the factories. The houses were in the district of the port, very poor houses, and very much in need of repairs, with poor people living in them.

The factory was small, with very old-fashioned machines, mostly for smoking and marinating, putting in oil. But there was a building, something to start with, and my father was willing to put all his energy and all his time into his new business.

"I myself had my plans, too. I was to go to high school the following year. Lotte had her plans; she was going to be a dancer. She was extremely set on it. But our parents didn't want it, so she learned shorthand and typewriting, and my father offered her a job as secretary to start in his own business, which she took. He paid her a fair salary and she took evening lessons in dancing. She hoped that she would be able to save enough of her money to give up her job for several months and prepare for a diploma and go on with her dancing.

"My sister Hilde, going to the high school at that time, was not very happy. She always said, 'City life I don't like, I do want to go to the country.'

"In the winter of 1919-20, the famous fair which had been suspended during the war came back to Hamburg. My sisters went to this fair, and Hilde, who usually was very obedient, came home long after midnight, which was extremely unusual. She used to be always the first, but that night she came in the latest. Next morning she sat down at the breakfast table looking strained, tense, almost sinister. She unfolded her napkin, and, while everybody looked at her, she said, 'I am engaged.'

"And then she said, 'Well, I know you. You all thought I would never find a husband.' You see what hatred this sister of ours had in herself, that she could announce her engagement in a wave of hatred against everybody! There was no place left for congratulations. And the first thing Mother said was 'How often have you met him without my knowing it?' Hilde said, 'I met him first yesterday afternoon.'

"So it was really love at first sight! This fiancé of hers was on vacation in Hamburg. He was studying agriculture

in southern Germany. So they had found one another through their love for agriculture and country life.

"In the afternoon the young man came. Being from a good Hamburg family—indeed, as Mother soon found out, from one of the best—he took good care to ask my parents formally for the hand of their daughter. Hilde was commonly considered a beauty. It was a beauty of the old-fashioned kind. She had wonderful blonde hair, hair that went down to her very feet, and really she was a beautiful, but not a shining, blonde. She had what was known as the Greek profile—a very straight profile. And she had very graceful, fine joints. Although she was the smallest of all of us she was more womanly than Lotte and I, and very gracious. She was always very restrained and enclosed within herself, and there seemed an emptiness behind all her beauty. But as a picture she was considered beautiful.

"Her fiancé, Robert, was twenty-one years old, and she was nineteen. He was tall and looked extremely well. He had brown eyes. They were very faithful eyes and Lotte and I used to call them 'dog eyes.' His voice was still changing, which is rather unusual for his age. He had a belief in himself that he could do everything he wanted to do. In our family, where everybody was somehow broken, it was wonderful to have such a young man with such undoubting belief in himself. And he talked! He talked, talked, talked, of his plans, of what he was going to do, and hardly anybody else ever could say anything.

"He was a son of a Hamburg merchant who had died during the war. Now, how did he come to be interested in country life and agriculture? As a boy of sixteen years, he had gone to what was called 'Agricultural Emergency Help.' That was an organization formed during the war to get the city boys to help the peasants at the harvest, because many of the men were drafted. So this city boy had gone out in the country, to a big Junker estate, and he was set upon becoming a farmer after the war. He then was seventeen.

"He volunteered for the Army. He was soon promoted

to lieutenant, and he had seen the defeat, and through him we got first a real picture of the conditions on the western front. He had led his troops back to Germany safely and demobilized, and his most urgent wish was to study agriculture and have his own farm.

"But his father's firm had suffered greatly through the war and there was no money left to buy a farm. He studied in an agricultural high school. His professor was against the Junkers, not so much for political reasons, but because of what is called 'agricultural efficiency.' The Junker estates, on the whole, were old-fashioned and could have been much more efficient if they were modernized. Now, Robert, very much impressed by this teacher, had got it into his mind, too, to modernize the Junkers. The students with their teacher intended to get the Junkers at their weak spot. Junkers were always in debt. So their idea was to make a loan bank which would give loans to the Junkers on the condition that the Junkers would accept an administrator whom they nominated, who would himself see that this money was used to modernize the estates instead of for the luxury of the Junkers.

"Now, Robert developed all these beautiful ideas, and my father listened. After he finished Father only asked him, very dryly, 'And to whom is the money paid? Who has hold of the money, you or the Junkers?'

"'Now,' said Robert, 'naturally, we are only administrators, we have no security in hand, so the money will go to the Junkers.' Father said, 'You will never modernize Junkers this way.'

"Well, Robert wouldn't believe him. He was young and full of enthusiasm. Hilde and he married one year later and he got his job as administrator on a big Junker estate, and there he tried to 'modernize the Junkers.'

"And I won't forget Berthe. Berthe no longer spoke proudly of 'our' government. She did not speak of the government at all. She was much too busy searching for an apartment. The housing shortage was enormous. Berthe could find no house, and without a home she could not get

married. In order to ease the housing shortage, the Socialists had wanted a law that families should have no more rooms than there were members in the family and the other rooms should be given to those who were without shelter. The old reactionary, indeed, the whole bourgeois press, urged against it. They had beautiful slogans—those people were never short of beautiful slogans! One slogan was that ‘the home of the family would be no longer holy’ if strangers were to come in! At the end, they defeated the law. For several weeks it seemed, however, as if this law would pass and the newspapers announced applications would soon be issued, on which every family had to state the number of persons living in the family.

“Now, Mother was extremely upset about this. She went to the utmost against the Weimar Republic, which had given her the right to vote. Then she got a clever idea. I learned of it one day when I went to the kitchen. Finding Berthe here at a time when she was usually out to look for a place to live in, I asked, ‘Why are you here?’

“Berthe said, ‘Well, there is no use looking around, and your mother has told me I can stay here with my husband.’ And I said, ‘Oh, isn’t that wonderful! I never thought that Mother would have such an idea.’ Berthe looked at the floor and said nothing. I said, ‘Well, what’s wrong?’ Berthe said, ‘Would you like to start your new marriage in a basement?’

“So it was! Mother had offered to let her marry and stay with her husband in this dark cellar room, so that she could write on the application form one family more living in this apartment. This was surely not the meaning of the Republic of Weimar! But Mother got her way and at least Berthe could get married.

“You see how we all had our plans and were on our way to realize them.

“And then, something happened. The ‘Free Corps’ marched against the Republic. The Free Corps were groups of soldiers and officers who had gone on fighting after the war was over. According to Armistice conditions

they should have been disarmed, yet they went on waging war against the Poles and above all against Bolshevik Russia. We all knew about it. So did the Allies. They did not officially approve but closed their eyes. Although they wanted Germany to be disarmed against themselves they had no objection to their fighting the Russians. This may happen again, if we do not watch out. There may be whole units of 'Free Corps' today in Germany ready to march again if they are asked to or if we let them."

"Against Russia?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied. "But after the First World War, the antiwar wave was so strong throughout the world that millions really had the feeling that they could do something to prevent a new war. In England, for instance, the workers struck against intervention in Russia and the shoremen refused to load arms. Masses of French soldiers sent to Russia by their government refused to side with the White Army of corrupt Russian feudalism. They revolted and had to be withdrawn in a hurry. And American soldiers sent by their government felt—as I learned here—absolutely out of place and wanted to go home as soon as possible.

"Well, now the Allies wanted the Free Corps disarmed. For a long time we heard hardly anything about them. They seemed to have been disarmed and to have gone back to civilian life.

"Only through a queer chance our family came to know where they still were. Hilde and Lotte came back from a vacation at Uncle George's estate. Lotte had left the great estate after a few days, without asking permission of my parents, and had gone to a friend in Bremen, and had joined Hilde only on her way back home. Mother was extremely upset about this, and as soon as my sisters arrived and we sat down at the coffee table, as is usual when somebody comes home, she said, 'How could you dare leave?' Lotte said, 'Why, my friends were better people than Uncle George's.' Mother said, 'How can you dare say such a thing? George is the best society you can find.' Lotte



only laughed. 'Best society! Hilde, tell our parents what is going on.' Hilde got pale and Lotte said, 'Hilde doesn't want to speak about it, but there were all the lieutenants and their crew.' Now Father grew attentive. 'What lieutenants and their crew?' he asked. 'Well, the soldiers that didn't want to disarm,' Lotte said. 'Ah,' said my father, 'that is where the Free Corps hide! On the big Junker estates!'

"Mother just couldn't believe it. And Lotte said, 'Maybe they fought the Poles for a good national cause, but what they are doing now, that is not a national cause, it is scandal.' Father said, 'But what are they doing now?' 'Ask Hilde,' Lotte said. Hilde said, 'You know that you shouldn't talk about it.' Lotte said, 'I don't mind. There were the farm hands wanting to have better wages. What did the Free Corps do? The Junkers used them against their farm hands.' So the Junkers used the Free Corps as wage breakers, as the first real terror group against their own Germans.

"Well, we heard about it. What could we do? Maybe we could have done something about it, but we saw no way, because it is hard in such a complex situation, and still thinking in national terms, to denounce them to the victors. You see? On the other hand, it was, as Father solemnly said, the duty of the Republic 'for which I have voted' to get rid of them.

"Now came some months in which we sometimes were reminded of them when we heard rumors that the Free Corps demanded to be taken into the new 'Reichswehr,' the standing army of one hundred thousand men which the Allies had granted to the Republic. The Reichswehr refused to take them in. You see, the Reichswehr was in the hands of the old military caste, the Junkers, the fine people; they looked upon the Free Corps with contempt. The Free Corps were to a large degree sons of middle-class people uprooted through the war.

"I might say that among the Free Corps were groups who took national honor, heroism, and so on very seri-

ously. They refused to accept our defeat. They had fought an outlawed war, and when they came home they were demoralized, utterly spoiled either for civilian life or for military discipline. Only a mere handful of them turned away in disgust from what others did; most of them became the nucleus for the Nazi terror forces.

"Well, we liked neither the Reichswehr nor the Free Corps and we thought, 'Let those people quarrel! The more they quarrel among themselves the less they will disturb us!'

"But in March, 1920, suddenly the Free Corps marched from the country into the cities to overthrow the government! They wanted to build a new one which would force the Reichswehr to accept them. This march was later called the 'Kapp Putsch.'

"The government of the Weimar Republic did not fight. Unprepared as it was, it fled from Berlin. For days terror reigned in our cities. Liberals, Jews, workers, worker leaders, Catholics were alike mistreated and murdered.

"And then the workers, spontaneously and in one united front, went into a general strike—all over the country. There was no traffic, no factories were working, nothing, nothing, nothing! A united workers' front, silently and with wholehearted strike, stood up against these 'putschists.' And the putschists had to go back. They were defeated through the means of the workers' general strike—and the government came back to Berlin.

"The Free Corps did not reach the quiet district where we lived. Yet, they did disturb us. Father, for instance, was just exporting quite a lot of fish to Switzerland. With the general strike, the fish didn't arrive in Switzerland for many days. It rotted, it was refused. There was no insurance on damage from political interference. He had to pay for the fish in valuta because it mostly came from Norwegian ships and this was a bad loss, indeed. Father had worked hard to make a go of his fish business a year ago. It had not been easy, yet he had set a few savings aside.

And I think he was not exaggerating when he told us that his savings now were lost.

"While looking around to see on whom he could push the burden of this loss, he saw his daughter Lotte, who worked for him. And he told her, 'You can stay with me only if you work without salary, until I have recovered from these losses.' For Lotte this meant giving up her dancing lessons, for which she paid. She was so desperate that she refused to go on working, and Mother intervened, telling her, 'You see, there is no sense in all these things. You had better listen to me and do what every girl has done at your age—go to a finishing school and learn cooking and housework.' And my sister Lotte, seeing herself cut off from the plans she had made for her life, gave in. But how desperate she was!

"For me, too, this Kapp Putsch had its bad sides, for I was just about to be confirmed. Grandmother was supposed to come to my confirmation. She couldn't come, so I had to have my confirmation without her.

"I want to tell you here about the minister under whom I was confirmed. He had been in Russia with the Red Cross Commission. He came back impressed by two things, the general ideas of Russian revolution, which he thought were, at the bottom, full of Christianity; and with the bad behavior of our German troops. When he announced his first sermon, naturally, the best of Hamburg society went to listen to him. We were there, too. The text of his sermon was 'Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?'

"He spoke about the behavior of the German troops in White Russia and the Ukraine, and of their cruelties, and of how they destroyed everything and had no Christian concepts. During his speech the church gradually emptied. People wouldn't listen to it at all, and when we came out groups were standing before the church, saying, 'This man has to go!' To them it was a scandal. It was one of the rare occasions when Father had gone to church.

Father took it for granted that this minister spoke the truth. And he looked at the people and he smiled ironically and said, 'So that's our society!'

"And Mother's friend Mrs. von Bülow was so disgusted, and she cried, 'This minister has to go.' And Mother said, 'Naturally—it is a scandal!' I had come quite to the realization that we were not, at least, better than others. I said to myself, 'He's telling the truth. This one man has courage.'

"I had been so impressed that I asked Mother to have my confirmation from this minister. This minister formerly had handled four to five hundred confirmations every year. This year there were only twenty-two. The good Hamburger families did not want him any more.

"I was very religious at that time. It was usual in the year of our confirmation that we thought over our conception of religion. Still I was opposed to the usual church, and before going to confirmation I went to this minister and told him that I could not believe in some of the formalities we had to swear to—that Christ was God's own son, for example. I said, 'I don't know whether Christ is really God's son. I only know that he was a very wonderful man and set a pattern for our behavior.' He said, 'Well?' And then I said, 'I cannot go to Communion because I don't believe that the wine is Christ's blood and the bread is the flesh of his body.' He said, 'I will confirm you. You are not obliged to go to Communion, and you can choose your own text.' So I chose my own text, and it was 'God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.' With this I was confirmed. It was as well that Grandmother couldn't come, because when she heard it she was very much upset. She came a few days later, after the general strike was over, and by the way, Hilde's fiancé, too, arrived just at the right time to celebrate his formal engagement.

"To go back again to the general strike; Father, although he had lost his small savings, was deeply impressed by the action of the workers. That such strong action, without violence, could be possible, and could de-

teat the Putsch, impressed him deeply. When the old government came back, when only a few of the Kappist leaders, and not even the most important ones, were arrested, when Ludendorff, who had received the Kappist troops at the Brandenburger Tor, was not arrested, he said that the working class really deserved a better government. Ludendorff was only invited as a witness at the trial.

"Why did the Republic act so weakly? Here we come to the military again. The old Junker caste kept the military power of the small new Reichswehr. Noske, one of the Social Democrat leaders, had given this slogan: 'Someone has to play the bloodhound against the Communists.' To defeat the Communist movement, the Socialists needed the military. Second, they agreed on the question of national defense. Being surrounded by armed neighbors, Germany had to have some military strength. Socialists, leftists, liberals in general are very hostile to militarists and they are not willing voluntarily to go into the army. And yet they agree to the necessity of defense. You have the same problem. It is very dangerous, for it leaves the army entirely to adventurers, and to the military-minded, and beyond the control of the people themselves.

"For the Russians the situation was different. They had had a civil war, and they had emerged with a reliable army. But this did not happen in Germany. The Reichswehr kept neutral. Mother said to Father, 'What do you want? The Reichswehr has proved that they are not against the government. They are neutral.' My father had said, 'An army that is neutral when its own government is threatened is in reality not neutral.'

"The Reichswehr was a safeguard of national defense, but still the reactionary group needed some force for the internal struggle, and to defeat the left. This became the task of the Free Corps, the putschists, or, later, the National Socialists. It was a division of tasks. In the minds of the Reichswehr, fascist organizations were doing the dirty work for them. They thought that later on, when

the leftists were beaten, they would be strong enough to keep the National Socialists in check."

I had some questions: "Were the people—and by that I mean average people—aware of all this? Is this a reconstruction, an understanding that you have made of the situation afterward? Was it apparent at the time?"

"It was apparent only to a few. The role of the Free Corps was quite apparent, but this secret plan of the Reichswehr was not seen by the average people. I cannot say that I understood it myself. But there were some things which stuck in my head and which I later understood. There was, for instance, Hilde—I am always amazed when I remember how fixed her pattern already was. When Father said, 'I am afraid they will take the Free Corps into the Army,' she said, 'No, they won't.'"

"What made Hilde so completely sure they wouldn't?" I asked.

"She repeated the argument of Uncle George, that the Reichswehr wouldn't make their hands dirty with the job the Free Corps was doing."

"It would be just the same as the Ku Klux Klan entering our army. They wouldn't have it," I remarked.

"Yes, yes," Erna agreed eagerly. "The Free Corps really parallels the Ku Klux Klan. They were much more national, of course, while here are race questions. But at the bottom it was the same group who took the law into its own hands."

"After the Kapp Putsch was over and law and order restored once more, everybody hoped that normal times would come and we would lead our usual lives again. Father went about his business, trying to restore what he had lost; Hilde went to the country to learn agriculture since she was going to marry into the country. But quite against Father's wish she went to a Junker estate. Lotte went to her finishing school."

"I began with high school, after I had had a terrible fight about it with Grandmother. I think that was the greatest struggle I ever had had with myself, since Grand-

mother was very ill already and Mother had told us that she wouldn't live for long and that this visit would be the last time probably that we would see her. With this new knowledge in my heart, I wanted to be as kind to her as I could be. But when she came to our home, the first thing Mother naturally did—you see the only person I am not so objective about is Mother!—was to complain that I insisted on going to high school. Grandmother was very much upset about it and really angry with me. Yet even for Grandmother's sake I could not give in.

"It is interesting that Mother, who had wanted my other sisters to go to high school, had returned to the old pattern for women. Now, having achieved the right to vote, she thought everything else should remain where it was before. She was glad my sisters didn't want to go on with high school, and she was very much against my going, and it was only Father, always calling me the 'dumbbell' of the family, who helped me. He said, 'Well, you may go to high school because you are too stupid for business, anyhow.' So with this sentence he gave me permission."

**B**EFORE I tell you how I, personally, first experienced inflation with all its confusion, I want to explain the background. It is very difficult for America to understand, because the language deceives us and leads us astray. The same word 'inflation' is used here for two different things. You say, even now, 'This is inflation.' You mean only that life becomes more expensive. You see, it is different whether the price of butter is fifty cents or two dollars and whether it is fifty cents and later on one billion dollars. This latter is what happened to us, not for one year, not for two years, but until fall 1923, or five years after the end of the war.

"We were deceived, too. We used to say, 'All of Germany is suffering from inflation.' It was not true. There is no game in the whole world in which everyone loses. Someone has to be the winner. The winners in our inflation were big-business men in the cities and the 'Green Front'; from peasants to the Junkers, in the country. The great losers were the working class and above all the middle class, who had most to lose.

"How did big business win? Well, from the very beginning they figured their prices in gold value, selling their goods at gold value prices and paying their workers in inflated marks. Professor Emil Lederer, who later came to the United States, estimated that workers' wages and employees' salaries provided twenty-four to twenty-eight gold billions of extra profit for big business."

"Did the people know nothing of this?" I asked.

"They learned to know it," she replied. "In fact, the



inflation stopped at the moment when the workers, through many strikes, succeeded in getting their wages paid daily in gold value. And then inflation had lost its value for big business. Yes, we found that inflation, which according to the bourgeois newspapers seemed to be a 'catastrophe of nature' or 'a thing which has slipped out of control of everyone,' could be stopped.

"The same devaluation happened to savings. It is estimated that approximately fifty gold billions of savings were lost, mostly by the middle class, through the devaluation of the war bonds, through the devaluation of the mortgages which were paid off in devaluated money, and so on. The average middle-class people learned far later than big business to figure in gold. They would buy goods, sell them with a small margin of profit as they used to do, only to find out that the new supply they had to buy had increased so much in prices that they could buy less for the same money. The middle class was far less organized than the workers were, and they were hard pressed from both sides, from the workers who demanded higher wages and from big business who increased the prices more quickly than they could follow.

"You see the great winner in inflation—big business! When inflation ended big business had not only reconverted its industry but had modernized it tremendously. The bourgeois press called it 'the miracle of German industry,' which had, despite war and inflation, recovered and reorganized completely, thus enabling Germany to face competition on the world markets. Sounds beautiful, doesn't it! The opposite, however, was true, for German industry did not recover despite inflation but by means of inflation.

"You know, I, too, learned all this only many years after inflation. Sternberg explained it to me when I first met him. Yet, I was so used to the slogans of the 'miracle of German industry' that I must have seemed stupid. He enlightened me for the first time. I have seen him explain it to many other people of the middle class. Some of them

wanted to beat him, others got so angry at big business that they wanted to start a revolution immediately.

"I must mention another thing. Many Americans have the idea that German industrial recovery was due to American loans. This is not quite true, either. We could say that they brought the already modernized industry into full gear. The American loans were given after the Dawes Plan, which came in 1924. Germany paid eight gold billions of reparations to the former Allies. Germany took, however, as loans from abroad, twenty-five gold billions—about seventeen gold billions more than she paid reparations, as you can see. And yet it was far less than the money which big business extracted from workers, employees, and the middle class during inflation, and from which they really modernized German industry.

"By the way, this is one thing I learned, too, many years later, and which at first I wouldn't believe, namely, that Germany never really paid reparations, because they took more in loans than they paid in reparations. They only paid in kind for the first year after the war, but later on, as you can see from the figures I just gave, they paid less than they got in loans. Mother always insisted that inflation came because of the reparations.

"Another thing that was rather confusing was the exchange course of the mark at the international stock exchange. I told you how we constantly looked at the dollar exchange in our newspapers, saying, 'The dollar goes up once again.' The Dutch, the Swiss, the Scandinavian, the British, the American money was stable money. But, as I want to stress again, for us they went up and our mark went down. Foreigners came to Germany, buying houses and estates from impoverished good families for a handful of dollars, crowns, or sterling. They were spending money at liberty. Those our people saw with their own eyes, while they did not see the new, the modern machines being installed in factories of big business. How easy for them to distract the people, to tell them, 'The foreigners take advantage of our misery!'

"And by the way, I saw this same thing happening in France when I first went there in 1927. France had inflation then, too, not such a big one as we had in Germany, but the franc was devaluating. But there were Americans with their dollars in the best hotels, buying the most expensive things, and I saw the French people demonstrate in the streets, crying, 'Down with the Americans!' I recognized then the same feelings that we had had.

"But let us go back to the German people and the way they were deceived and deceived themselves. Let's get back to the money exchange. You know, the foreign valuta jumped up quicker than the prices of consumer goods. Thus there was a widespread belief that prices rose because the foreign valuta went up. And why did the foreign valuta go up and the mark down? 'Because of the speculation on the stock exchange.' This explanation was the opposite of the truth, but millions believed it. It was just what the Nazis wanted. 'Who speculates? The Jews,' so they cried. Do you remember how Mother suddenly made such a clear distinction between the Jews, who know how to do business, and the Germans, who were not so clever at it? Well, this was the first reflection in our family of this anti-Semitic, National Socialist propaganda. It hammered into the heads of millions of people the combination of words: 'Money—exchange—inflation—and the Jews.' Big business, in the meantime, could go on making business—undisturbed.

"Inflation finished the process of moral decay which the war had started. It was a slow process over a decade and more; so slow that really it smelled of a slow death. It gives the whole picture of Germany in all its ugliness, and it undermined the Republic of Weimar. When inflation was over, the psychological preparation for fascism was complete, the minds of the people were prepared for the Nazis.

"I have for my purpose divided the time of inflation into the first period, which I call the 'disintegration,' and the second, which I call 'the formation of the fronts.'

"For me, personally, the inflation began when Hilde had gone to the country, Lotte had gone to her school, and Father gave to his only daughter at home a double allowance, saying, 'I give you more and yet you get less.'

"I looked at him and said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Well, it is because of the inflation.' I shrugged my shoulders. I thought, 'Well, inflation is madness, anyhow. Anything can happen.' He said, 'Now, listen to me. I am explaining it to you. I figure in Swiss valuta. Now, formerly eighty pfennigs were one Swiss franc; now one Swiss franc is eight marks. Had I formerly given you two marks, I would have had to pay to you two and a half Swiss francs. Now, however, I have only to give you thirty Swiss cents for your two marks. So although I double your allowance, you get less than before.' I thought that over, and said, 'Well, then, couldn't you give me still more, because even if you give me double, you still pay me less than before?' Father laughed. Then he got quite serious and said, 'You are just like the workers in the factory.' And he wouldn't hear anything more. I didn't know quite whether I should be grateful or whether I should feel myself cheated.

"Yet another very confusing picture of inflation was that part of life wasn't affected by it at all. There were ceiling prices, for instance. What was important for me, although I couldn't buy a cup of coffee with this money, a bit of candy or chocolate, the theater prices had not gone up and the streetcar fares had a ceiling price and, really, the things that I had to pay from my allowance did not go up. So, in this complexity, although I got less, I had, in fact, more than before. All these technical questions made it very difficult for anybody to understand for a long time what was happening.

"When the mark really was falling, everybody began to ask, 'Who is guilty?' This question was confusing, too, because the ruling class, who wanted to mask the business they did, could give you a long list of guilty ones. For instance, take the question of reparations. The vanquished had to pay for the war. It had always been so. But wars

had become more and more expensive, with industrialized warfare, and the reparations which all the former enemies now listed as covering the costs of their war were sums quite beyond our understanding. Moreover, the Allies did not make a bill that was definite. More could still be added. It was a Damocles' sword hanging over us, and a very good excuse to say, 'You see why we have the inflation; we have to pay so much to the Allies!' Thus I came to believe that foreigners are the guilty ones and would have gone on doing so, I think, if I had not met my Armenian friend, Lulu.

"She was in my high-school class and very soon we were friends. She was an only child of an Armenian father and a German mother; a well-to-do family, and of an atmosphere so different from ours that in our extremes we were attracted to each other. For instance, we went to her home and Lulu had a sitting room of her own! She showed to me her Negro sculptures and Negro pictures. That was a revelation for me. You must understand this, because, you see, there were Negro troops in Germany in the French occupation army, and all Germany cried out because these Negro troops were here, and what they were doing to German women! This being the first time that we had been confronted with the Negro problem, it seemed to us that they were primitive animals. And now I had a friend who showed me Negro culture! I didn't dare to tell Mother. I think she might have taken me out of school because I got to know such a girl. I asked Lotte about it. I said, 'Do you think Negroes have culture?' Lotte said, 'Why not? Why shouldn't they?' Then Lotte said, 'During the war we lived cut off from the world, and we grew up with the idea that our culture was best and our civilization was the only one. But now we have to see that we are in competition with the other world.' "

"Was Lotte so broad-minded?" I asked, somewhat astonished.

"Through a friend of hers," Erna answered. "But, you see, more and more families began to be liberals, and more

and more the younger generation came into contact with these liberals."

"Was Lotte's friend also a foreigner?" I asked.

"No, no, she was a daughter of a Hamburg surgeon. This Hamburg surgeon had married the sister of a German painter, who became bolshevik after the war. He made a so-called bolshevik settlement near Bremen where Lotte went sometimes with her friend. It was very interesting. I visited there once, too. Christian communism, he called it. It was really a wild place. There were paintings of very strong colors and you couldn't see so much what the figures were. You know this kind."

"Modernistic painting," I said, recognizing it.

"It was all considered bolshevik," Erna said with decision. "But then anything that was new was red or bolshevik. There was naturally the sex question at that place. Everybody slept with everybody else."

"So it was not quite Christian!" I said, laughing a little at her grave look.

"No, but they called it Christian, because they had a common life, and a very primitive one and shared everything. They had made everything themselves, the houses and the paintings in the houses."

"Did your mother know that Lotte was there?" I ask.

"My mother knew," Erna replied, "but since Lotte's friend was from one of the best Hamburg families, she didn't dare object. But with me it was different, because my friend was only an Armenian. There she could say something. You know, my mother's values were society values. An Armenian family was different. That was not the best Hamburg society. So my mother's judgment was never a real judgment. Indeed, in her whole life I never found a judgment that came from the things themselves, but a judgment that came from social position. Which is, by the way, rather usual

"This so-called decline of morals—although I always refused to say 'decline of morals'—I say, this gradual process of decay of the old and the search for new values was wide-

spread in our younger generation. It was a sign that the old pattern of life had broken down, and, as my sister Lotte used to put it, 'The terrible thing is, we have to believe in something. When we do not know in what to believe, we believe every day in a new thing, and we have every day a new prophet. But better to have every day a new thing than to believe in nothing.'

"My friend Lulu also had a boy friend. It was amazing. I had a friend who had a boy friend!

"I was at that time an admirer of Wagner, and having now a double weekly allowance, I was able to go to *The Twilight of the Gods*, if I bought only a standing ticket. Lulu said, 'Oh, I would like to go with you.' I said, 'There are only twenty tickets for standing room and you have to be there at four o'clock!' Now Lulu shrugged her shoulders and said, 'Well, if you say so, I will come.'

"It was, however, very tiresome to stand. I had found out a trick. You had to have a stand leg and a leg on which you relaxed." Erna jumped up and showed me how to stand for hours, on one leg and then the other. "You had to stand on one leg, and then you changed it. So I taught Lulu this trick, and by and by, as time went on, everybody was tired and everybody got in bad humor.

"I tell you this, although it seems unimportant. Yet, standing with Lulu there and for the first time seeing it as a new thing, and looking back to the past, I saw really what had happened. Here was this standing for a few tickets for a few real music lovers who had no money. They regarded the tickets as their privilege. Most of those who were there with their scores were hostile to all the others who took their places. So it seemed to me that I saw in this a real symptom of what was going to happen. The pie was growing smaller and more people wanted to have pieces of the pie, and so there was nothing left from the 'good neighbor' atmosphere of former days. Even here, in the place of high culture, everybody saw an enemy in everybody else.

"Well, we got our tickets, we got in to hear *The Twi-*

*light of the Gods.* I shed tears, as I used to do, and was very ashamed, but Lulu didn't. After the opera, I said good-by to her and I went home, and on the way home, at night, I understood what I call the disintegration. There were the heroic gods. They set fire to the whole world, yet they did it for great things, for heroic deeds, for love—for this beautiful thing, love! And how is it with us? We fight for tickets, we fight for pennies. It is these ugly little small things that break us down. And I went there along the Alster with its big mansions and villas. A few were beautifully painted and well cared for, but most of them were ugly looking. And you could just see those beautiful ones were the homes of those who profiteered from inflation, and the others were the losers. There you had two Germans, the *nouveau riche*, the profiteers, and the old good society that was going down.

"It was all so mixed up with money. We used to consider money as nothing, and we said, 'Money is dirty,' and 'One doesn't speak about money.' And now here everything was mixed up with money and with small sums only and small things, and everybody was going against everybody else.

"So the conception of a German mission, that I once had, went to pieces before my very eyes.

"Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you about the foreigners. Standing there in line for the opera tickets Lulu told me, 'By the way, we are moving next month.' I said, 'You are moving? From your beautiful house? But why?' Lulu said, 'My father has had great losses.' Her father had imported all kinds of fancy things from the Balkan States—gadgets, you would call them. He had now, however, to pay for them in valuta and could only sell them in paper marks in Germany, so he had lost so much money that he had to sell their house and they had to move into a small apartment.

"I saw then that there were foreigners, too, who lost money. As Lulu put it to me, 'Now, I am really part of you because I have the same fate that you have.'

"At this time of our great disintegration, the news came



that Grandmother was going to die, and Mother went to the Rhineland to stay with her for the last days. While she was away I had summer vacation, and I was much in the garden. And, as was natural in those days, I was more thoughtful than ever before. Thinking of Grandmother and being quite aware of my always longing to go back there, I had a feeling that all my opposition was not a longing, actually, for new things, but a longing to go back to the safe old way which was no more. The new things I wanted to happen were really a longing for old things to come back. Yet, with Grandmother dying, they couldn't come back. Even the house, to which Grandmother had said I could always come back, wasn't Grandmother's house any more—it belonged now to a Dutchman.

"So the ground was taken from under my feet. Although there was a strong trend in me toward the new, the fact that the old could never come back was still stronger. Being a rather sentimental girl, I thought of it in terms of the Bible, in terms of the lost son, and how beautiful had been the life of the lost son, who could go out and sin and do everything he wanted, and yet come back to his old house. But where should we come back when our adventure had failed? I got frightened—for the first time, I think, really frightened—for the life to come.

"Mother had said before going, 'If only Grandmother had died a few years earlier, she would have died more happily. She wouldn't have seen the defeat, she wouldn't have known that her son had been killed in vain, she wouldn't have seen all the decline.' But Mother said this in a tone which she used when she complained about herself. So it was not so much a complaint about Grandmother as a complaint that she herself had to live in this terrible world. I saw that Mother, too, had lost something. She could enjoy life no more. Later it became a slogan: *Unlust*—'the dislike of life.' This point I think is very important if you are to understand National Socialism. Here in America it is always believed that the National Socialists had 'educated for death.' But in a nation that

enjoys life, you cannot educate for death. There has to be within this nation a dislike of what life has become if you can really educate for death. A whole stratum of our society, indeed, was disintegrating. But it came so slowly—not like a crash—that it was utterly ugly. There was not any heroic event or even any sensational event. It was a slow rotting.

"The telegram came, 'Grandmother is dead.' I was very lonely because, unfortunately, at that time my father took the occasion to go astray with our maid."

"Not Berthe?" I exclaimed.

"No," Erne said. "Berthe had at last found an apartment and had left. We had a new maid now, one who disgusted Mother very much, because she wore high heels, short skirts, and used lipstick. But it was very hard to get maids, so—I still think that the real reason why Mother refused to take me along with her to Grandmother was that she wanted me to take care of Father."

"Was this his first mistake?" I asked, putting it as delicately as I could.

"The first I really knew of," Erna said.

"It must have been hard for you," I said, to help her. But she needed no help. She looked at me with clear gray eyes.

"I ought to have pitied Father, because he must have felt very alone and he certainly was not happy with Mother. But I was still at that age where all sex questions were in twilight. I heard them come home together. I heard them go out. Father went out through the front door and at the same time the maid went out through the back door. And they came back at two or three o'clock in the night. They came back together through the front door. I didn't hear the maid go down. So I knew, yet somehow I didn't want to know it.

"Mother learned all about it when she returned home, although I said nothing.

"I do not even now see how Mother took it. She had a

front, of course. This front was that she found it beneath her dignity to concern herself about it.

"In this time of terrible despair about Grandmother, and of what happened to my father, I wrote my first drama. It was a bad drama, naturally, although much influenced by Wagner. But, still, today, looking back at it, I think it expressed very clearly my state of mind. There was a prelude which I called the Mourning Song for Germany, Germany that was defeated, and we fought against each other. It was the first time, I think, that I succeeded in putting personal experiences and general events in form. It had, however, a very old pattern, insofar as a solution for all the world was the love of a woman who was so utterly good and wise that every bad sinner in the world at least repented when he saw this wonderful and pure and good woman, and so on—the old pattern, you see!" She laughed sadly and ruefully.

"Well, after four weeks Mother came back. She told us what was happening in Cologne. She had visited one of Grandmother's sisters who owned a big textile factory there. This factory was taken over by the occupation army. Mother had always said when mentioning her, "The poor dear! How she must suffer!" Yet, now we learned that this family got so much compensation that they were soon starting to build a new, modern factory.

"Father immediately said, 'Well, now I know where our money is going.' Mother said, 'But that has nothing to do with our money.' Father said, 'Who do you think pays them? Do you think the Allies? No, our own government has to pay for it. And from what do you think they pay? From our money—from our taxes and from our inflated war bonds!'

"You see, the war had been paid mostly not by taxes, but by war loans. Almost all the savings of the small and middle-class people had got into war bonds during the war. Who pays for a war? Internationally, the vanquished nation is supposed to pay; actually it is the people with their war bonds—and in Germany these war bonds were

being devaluated until we could paper our walls with the bills.

"Mother had other news, too. One of her cousins had married a young man who had been commander of a U-boat during the war. He was of a well-to-do but not very rich family and had been demobilized. In former times he would have had two ways open to him—to stay with the Navy, or to go to a university and then find a job. Now we had no longer a navy, and his parents lost their money through war and inflation and couldn't give him an education.

"I must tell you that the separation between the intellectual class and the workers is much smaller here than it was in Germany. There it was really an abyss. So the third way open to this young man, if he did not want to sink down to the proletariat, was to marry a rich girl, which he did.

"I tell you of him because he was typical of this young generation of the middle class who had had a military 'career' during the war, but could not make a civilian career during the peace, because their parents' fortune was swallowed up by inflation. Thousands of them became the so-called intellectual leaders of the National Socialist movement—if you can call the Nazis intellectuals! They organized the political structure of the Nazi party, while by and large the former Free Corps organized the terror apparatus. I once studied the curriculum booklet which the Reichstag published of its members. A high percentage of Nationalist Socialist Parliament members gave the same story with almost the same words: War, then demobilization, then college, then the necessity to leave college because of inflation.

"Well, Mother was very touched by the 'unhappiness' of this former U-boat commander. Father asked, 'Why is he unhappy? Hasn't he made a good marriage?' Mother answered, 'Yes, but you know he has no money, and he is only a clerk in a bank.'

"'Well,' Father said, 'to be a clerk in a bank is not

such a bad job.' Mother said, 'For someone who used to command a U-boat, I think it is rather hard. But I tell you, he is not one who is easily defeated. He is now building the *Flottenverein*' (committee for the restoration of a German navy). 'Well,' said Father, 'the British will enjoy that.' To that, Mother said, 'The British don't know anything about it.'

"I listened to this in amazement. Mother really had changed decidedly since the days immediately after the war when she spoke of the 'age of eternal peace' that was to come.

"Mother's own financial affairs looked bad too. Most of her inheritance was gone when Grandmother's houses were lost. Now the factory was to be sold. Her brother, my uncle Richard, had tried hard to bring the factory back to normal but, as Father said, 'Even if he had been a trained businessman he could not have saved the factory.' Why? Because he had not enough money to overhaul the old machines and to buy new and better ones. Oh, the son of Mother's friends, who had bought Uncle Richard's farm, did finally arrive in South America and found everything in order; and his parents did pay the sum that was due to Uncle Richard—in devaluated paper marks. Only, the prices for machines were now four times higher than at the time when Uncle Richard signed the contract for the sale of his farm. The money he got was therefore in reality but one-fourth of the money he had expected to get. Thus he could not buy the machines he wanted and he could not compete with the new machines which were on their way to big factories like those of our Cologne relatives. So the factory was sold at a terrible loss compared with the value it once had. Mother had even to renounce her share in the factory so that her brother, who had married in the meantime, could buy tickets to South America—which had to be paid for in dollars! In return for her share in the factory Mother was to get the remainder of Grandmother's fortune: money which had been invested in England, and had been confiscated during the war. This she

would get if and when the British were ready to free these accounts, or if and when our government would decide to compensate its citizens for their losses. Mother was certain that some day she would get her money.

"Well, to end the story of my uncle Richard, I have to say that he returned to his former ranch but as the employee of the new owner. It seemed very unjust.

"Hitler later on said that the Treaty of Versailles was but 'a piece of paper.' Well, those words that were so shocking to the whole world were not so shocking for those millions who had seen their money, their savings, their contracts become but pieces of paper. And Hitler knew with his instinct for the emotional reactions that his words would remind the people of what had happened to them during inflation and would fill them with rage. That is why Hitler used exactly the words 'a piece of paper.'

"Now, Mother had still the two houses which she had taken over as part of Father's business. These houses, however, were troublesome. If, for instance, a window broke, the replacement of the window now would cost more than all the rent she got in, because rents had ceiling prices while windows had not. One year later, by the way, the price of a new window would be higher than the price of the whole house. Mother wanted to sell these houses.

"But Father was very much against selling Mother's houses. He said, 'Let the houses go to pieces; later you can sell them, after the inflation is over, and you can still get some good money out of it. And the rent you get from the houses is just the rent you have to pay here.' Naturally our rent couldn't be raised either.

"But there was Hilde. She wanted to marry, she wanted to have her trousseau. Mother had some things from Grandmother, good linen and table silver, but Hilde wanted more. You see, her mother-in-law didn't like the marriage. She thought that her son could have married a richer girl. She was a very funny woman—so small and childlike—and you could see that she had been used to be a doll rather than somebody—"

"Who was she?" I asked.

"Robert's mother? She was a Danish woman who had married a rich German merchant. Well, she was very upset about her son's marriage, and so Hilde said, 'I can't come before her unless I have a good trousseau.' Mother agreed to this. Father said, 'Well, if Robert can't get along with his mother, he should marry a girl whom his mother loves, or else be master.'

"But Mother thought Hilde was right and she decided to sell the houses, anyhow, and to buy the trousseau.

"While all this inflation went on through many years, in between were times when the mark seemed to stop devaluating, and each time we people got a bit hopeful. People would say, 'The worst seems over now.' In such a time Mother sold the houses. It looked as if she had made a good business deal, for she got twice as much cash as she had paid. But the furniture she bought for Hilde had gone up five times in price and the little money that was left Mother put in a savings account. The worst was not over. Soon inflation started again with new vigor and swallowed bit by bit the savings accounts of Mother and of millions of others.

"Mother had, however, still another reason why she insisted on selling the houses. Something terrible had happened in one of them. An old couple lived in one of them whose two sons had been killed during the war. In their good days they had saved for their old age. Now their savings were devaluated and they had no sons to care for them. So one night they gassed themselves. Their bodies were found the next morning. Mother had previously threatened to put them on the street because they could not pay the rent. Although she hadn't done it, now she felt terrible pangs of guilt.

"And then Mother, who had never dreamed in her whole life, had her first nightmare. She dreamed that she was drowning in the sea, only the sea was not of water but of stones. Next morning she was still so upset that she told me her dream. It was amazing, indeed, because she never

had had a dream before and had always insisted that to be upset about a dream is quite silly.

"Lotte came home in the fall, full of courage and energy. If Mother had hoped she would be ready to conform to her wishes, she was quite wrong. Lotte was more set than ever on her dancing lessons. She did not go back to our father's office. She found a job in another office and again took her evening lessons in dancing.

"That went on for a month. Then one night Lotte came and said, 'Tomorrow we will have a visitor here.' I said, 'What visitor?' Lotte said, 'Juergen.' I said, 'Who is Juergen?' Lotte said, 'He is my friend.' 'Does Mother know anything of it?' I asked. 'No, you silly girl,' Lotte said. So here was quite a mess. What were we going to do about it? I said, 'Why haven't you prepared Mother?' She said, 'I just hadn't the courage. He is a painter—an artist.' I said, 'Oh, well, that looks bad! Does he have money?' 'No, he hasn't.' 'Is he of a good family?' 'His father was a peasant.' I said, 'Well, you will never get Mother to receive him into our house.' Lotte said, 'But I have to—I just have to!' Then I said, 'How do you know that he comes tomorrow?' Lotte said, 'He wrote me that he was coming to Hamburg, and I wrote him that my mother invited him to come to our house.' I said, 'Where did you get that letter?' '*Poste restante*,' she replied. Now, that was for us a decline in morals—terrible! And I said, 'Couldn't you meet him even once secretly, and tell him how difficult Mother is?' Lotte said, 'You may be afraid of Mother—but Mother is nothing. What I am afraid of is myself.'

"Then she told me she had met Juergen in the little town where she was in school. It had happened in a little café when she had sat reading a book of poems and he had been interested in her book and so they talked and then they had walked together, and he had asked whether she would pose for him. And she had gone to his studio and he had painted her, and she had always wanted him to kiss her. But when he really tried to kiss her, she had slapped his face and run away. Then she regretted it. She



wanted to see him. She had met him several times after that but she had not dared to go to his studio any more.

"Lotte had a very cynical way of expressing things. She said, 'Well, you know, that is what men are. They begin with poems and beautiful speeches and at the bottom it is every time the same. What do you think he said to me—that I am made to have a dozen children! So that is what it comes to—'

"I said, 'Don't you want children?' Lotte said, 'Naturally I want children, but only after I have finished my dancing lessons and I have done something.'

"So next day at the breakfast table she said, 'Mother, I am having a visitor this afternoon—a man called Mr. Sachs. I met him near the school and I have told him that you want to see him.' And then she was in a hurry to go to her office. Mother, knowing that Lotte and I were good friends, wanted to know more about it from me. Lotte left the whole mess to me. I told her only that Lotte had met him and wanted Mother to know him. Mother saw that she could do nothing against this visit.

"So Juergen came late in the afternoon. He was very tall, with water-blue eyes, reddish hair, very strong bone structure. He walked like a peasant with a very heavy step. He didn't fit anywhere in our family. But he came into the salon and Mother offered him a chair, and he just sat there with a folder with drawings on his knees and looking very uncomfortable. Lotte looked at me mockingly, and Mother was embarrassed, and Father asked him about his family. He answered questions shortly and never helped a bit in getting a conversation going. So at last Mother asked to see the drawings and he showed them to her. I was terribly interested in them because they were drawings from an old German saga, Wotan and Siegfried. I remember very well a picture of Siegfried, and this Siegfried looked just like Juergen—so strong.

"And then Juergen pulled out his last drawing. It was an illustration of Dante's *Inferno*. You know—'He who enters here has no hope to leave.' He had painted the

earth as if it had been brutally cut to pieces and split all over; and there was but one tree left, bare and forlorn; its two branches stretched out toward the sky as if in endless mourning. It was so terribly desperate. Even Mother became silent.

"And then Juergen said, 'Yes, that is war. Only city people can do this to nature.' So he had been in the war and he made city people responsible for everything that had happened! He felt as a peasant and was convinced that peasants could never have done that to the earth and to the trees and to nature.

"Lotte said, in her cynical way, 'You know, Juergen is quite an amazing person. He says he can only paint if he feels the creative soil under his naked feet.' She wanted to help him—but he was hurt too, and he felt subdued by her.

"Mother was impressed by his drawings but she did not like him. 'He doesn't know how to behave,' she said after he had left and she did not want him to come to her house again. But Mother could only forbid him her house. She could not forbid her daughter to go out and meet him. Father warned her, 'Better receive him here or else Lotte will meet him elsewhere.' But Mother was, as always, certain that she knew her daughters better than anyone else. She said, 'Lotte is not really interested in him.'

"Well, Father did know his daughter better. Lotte and Juergen met elsewhere until he left Hamburg and went to Berlin.

"And then came Christmas! Hilde had come home to prepare for her wedding, which was to be in a few weeks. And then Robert came. And Hilde made a terrible fuss about Robert and her trousseau and her wedding. Lotte called her 'the Queen,' and was angry at Juergen, who did not write letters to her; she called him 'that idiot.' On Christmas Eve she went to a party at her dancing school and didn't come home all the night. She came home the next morning at nine o'clock.

"Now, I haven't to tell you what a tragedy that was in

our home! I am still sure that nothing happened to Lotte but a nice dancing party with drinking and a few kisses maybe. Father believed so, too. But Mother was absolutely convinced that a girl who stayed out all night had done more than innocent things. 'Lotte has to leave my house immediately,' she said—to Father.

"While Father and Mother thus argued, Lotte slept. She slept through the morning, slept through noon, slept through the afternoon. Father and I went out for a walk. When we came home Lotte was gone."

"Gone?" I exclaimed.

"Gone," Erna repeated gravely. "Two days later a wire came from Berlin—'Juergen and I engaged.'"

"Well, Lotte might have married her Juergen anyhow, but there is one thing I am sure of. When I urged her to postpone her marriage at least until she had got her diploma, so that she could give lessons, earn money, and be independent if she wanted to, she replied scornfully, 'Earn money! Ridiculous! Our money isn't worth earning!'

"Yes, life is a hard fight; we women have all too often the easy escape into marriage. I think this is one of the reasons why so few women are ever in higher positions. Men haven't this easy escape; they have to fight it out."

"As I told you," Erna began the next morning, "I have always divided the years of inflation in Germany into the time of disintegration, and the time of formation of the fronts. Naturally, this division is a bit forced, since they merge with one another. But, on the whole, at first the disintegration was more in the foreground, and then the building of the fronts came more in the foreground.

"One sign of the disintegration of the good families was Mother's consent to Lotte's engagement to Juergen. When her wire arrived, Mother said, 'Better to have her married even to Juergen than to come home some day with a bastard.' She said this in the presence of all of us.

"It seems incredible, yet it is true. You know, at that time, many a daughter of good families ran away with a

man, and more than one natural child was born in the circle around our family. This was not only the aftermath of the war; it was due even more to inflation. The daughters of the good families could no longer get dowries; yet the young men who came home from war were not on a solid footing and they were more than ever dependent on dowries if they wanted to marry. The parents had still the old idea that a marriage had to be economically secure from the beginning. And, as Lotte and her girl friends used to say, 'If we wait until there is security in this world we must wait until we have no teeth and no hair!' The strongest impetus for many girls was to get away from their mothers, no matter how or with whom. The first man who offered a chance was the one with whom they went away, either marrying him or not."

I had a question. "Did they feel that as young people they would get away from the old and make a better world, or was it just to get away? In other words, was there any idealism?"

"Not all were the same," Erna replied. "Hilde, for instance, did not want to make a better world. She just wanted to stick to the old values. Lotte wanted to get away. Yet there was, in all of us, such a longing for 'love,' and many a daughter who ran away did it just 'for the sake of love.' Some did it in protest against 'women on the market,' or against 'the provider' her mother wanted her to marry. Yet no one really dared to pronounce the word love. It seemed such a doubtful value. German writers who dared write love stories were cut to pieces by 'modern critics.' Love was old-fashioned; sex was modern. Here was, indeed, one of the many sins of the 'radical' intellectuals of the Republic. They ridiculed love. Had they taken it seriously, this yearning of all youth to love and to be loved, had they tried to help them to find a new way, or to fight in order to better the world so that they could really love and be loved and live happily ever after! Instead, they ridiculed love. It was the Nazis who restored the 'right to love' in their propaganda slogans; many of

the younger generation, and not the worst part of them, listened and dared to speak of love again, not knowing that even while they were listening the Nazis were already preparing for a new war which would take away from them their husbands and their sons.

"Well, I was, as you know, rather sentimental and romantic and I, too, waited for the great love to come, yet that I would not even have dared to confess to myself. Besides, I had more urgent worries. Day after day I became more aware of the discrepancy between the things I learned at school and read in beautiful books, and 'the realities of life.'

"I had written a little play when Grandmother died but I no longer believed in the ideas I had put into it. I wanted to write a new play, one that was to be more realistic!

"I spoke about it with Lulu. I said, 'I have a new idea for a play about a woman who seems beautiful and good, but behind her mask, she is evil.' Lulu said, 'That is a wonderful idea—a devil fights inside every one of us.'

"I looked at her. 'Once I would have thought your conception wonderful. But now I am not thinking of the good and evil within us. It is not even a question of guilt. It is the ordinary conditions of our life that make a woman evil.' So I replied.

"I was, in a half-conscious way, thinking of Mother. Yes, the values she had which we had accepted for such a long time made her, in this world of ours, the destructive power. I have told you the story of the house. Why, for instance, did she press this old couple that committed suicide to pay the rent or move out? It was only because she wanted to give her daughter a dowry, believing still in the old notions of how a daughter should be married. All my life now I am pursued by this idea, this conflict of the so-called good things. If we stick to them at the wrong time they can destroy other things, even human lives.

"I tried to write that play but I felt more and more convinced that I could only write realistically if and when I

learned the 'realities of life.' This phrase was hammered into my head daily when Father came home, telling his womenfolks that he had to face the realities of life while we could enjoy it.

"He was, as you know, one of the very privileged people who earned in Swiss francs and had started his fish business in order to become 'independent from the fate of the German mark.' This independence, however, applied only to his business with Swiss customers, who made up but a small part of it, the much larger part dealing with German customers. Had business been as usual, his profits from his German business would have been far greater than that from Switzerland. Business, however, was not at all as usual and his small profits in Swiss francs amounted to a considerable sum, counted in German marks, while the profits from his business with German customers often enough amounted to nothing. Why? Father had explained it to Mother at the dinner table while Mother tried to listen patiently. He said he was 'surrounded by enemies.' There were, for instance, the big wholesalers, mostly ship-owners, who brought the fish in and sold it only for payment in cash. Father, however, and all his fellow fish dealers gave credits of eight to ten weeks to the small fish dealers all over the country, as had been usual for generations.

"Father would come home and tell Mother, 'Today the customer from Frankfurt has paid his bill.' 'Good,' said Mother. 'There is nothing good about it,' said Father. 'When I sent him the fish, I had to pay five hundred marks for a hundred pounds; today I have to pay five hundred and seventy-five marks for the same amount of fish. And where is my profit? Gone with the wind! It is about time that I drop the whole German business and concentrate on the Swiss market.' Mother said, 'But why don't you stop giving credit?'

" 'Because,' Father replied with impatience, 'we live in a system of free competition and if I stopped giving credit while others go on I would only lose my customers. I tell

you, free competition is a sound basis for business; the only trouble is that we have to pay cash to the wholesalers.' Mother said, 'Why don't you stop paying cash?' To that Father had but one answer: 'Because we of the middle class are not organized against the wholesalers while the workers are organized against us.'

"From there on he would go on complaining about the workers who constantly asked for 'the adjustment of their wages to the price increases,' who were, moreover, constantly demonstrating and every other week striking so that 'law and order' were far from being restored at the Hamburg port.

"The Holzmanns came to visit us. 'What Germany needs,' Father said to Mr. Holzmann, 'is a sound and healthy middle class, and what the middle class needs is a strong middle-class party.' Mr. Holzmann, a member of the Social Democratic party, said, 'It would be wiser for you to side with the workers against the monopolies.' Father replied, 'Good, if only the workers would side with us instead of striking against us.'

"The Von Bülow, Mother's friends from the German Far East Asia Club, also came to visit us, and Father repeated, 'What Germany needs is a sound and healthy middle class and what the middle class needs is a strong middle-class party.' To this, Mr. von Bülow, member of the German National party, the party of the old reactionary group, replied, 'We have already more than enough parties as it is. Why don't you side with us? We shall see that law and order are restored at the port.' Father said, 'But who guarantees us that you won't swallow us after we have checked the workers?'

"Well, I must say that the argument became so heated after that remark that Mother thought it wise to suggest a game of cards. But that was, and is, the position of the middle class—squeezed between the two big classes of big business and the workers. As long as the pie of national wealth and income is big enough to provide everyone with a decent piece, this is no problem. But in

Germany the pie was no longer big enough; it was much too small and the struggle for every piece of it was hard and bitter.

"Still, Father was not ready to side with the reactionaries against the workers; he hated the old ruling class too deeply and too bitterly for that, *and he saw, clearly enough, that once you side with them against the workers you may be the one who will be swallowed at the end.* So he said the republic should restore law and order—by force, if necessary. He had no objection to the use of the police force against the striking workers.

"Just at this time, when once again the port was full of unrest, it happened that my old play which I had written when Grandmother died was to be performed at school.

"Here I can say vanity moved me—vanity, vanity! Although I didn't believe any more in the old things, I was flattered by having my play performed on the school stage! We had an actress—a retired one, it is true, but a real actress—helping us in the rehearsals. My parents came for the performance. Lotte was not yet married; she was there, too, and friends of the family, and other girls' parents, and this actress even had invited other artists and the well-known critics. My play, in this small circle, was a real success; the play of the woman who heals everything through pure love. It was the old conception still. It was the idea of Gretchen and Faust.

"In the midst of this wonderful evening, I absolutely forgot that I did not believe in my play any more. It seemed to me that it really was right. But after the play—having been a goddess in the play—I had to hurry to change my dress, because my parents were waiting to go home. Then I came down to meet my father at the stairs, and he said that he had 'to bring his heavenly daughter back to earth.'

"We left the school, and on the street we saw two policemen. Farther on we met two more policemen. Mother said, 'The school directress has asked them for



protection this evening, because there is unrest in the workers' district and one never knows whether the reds and the rioters might come here and disturb us.' The whole question of Germany and of the time in which we lived was back again and Father, looking at the policemen, said, 'Well, the poor devils, they won't be very happy to work overtime.' Mother said, 'Well, they got good tips for it.' I was suddenly conscious of the contrasts of the evening and I had a very queer experience. As I went through the streets I saw my shadow from the street light—my shadow which, seen after we had passed one street light, was very long, and yet the nearer we came to the next street light, it shrank. And this shrinking together of my own shadow seemed to express my feeling at this moment. 'You aren't so big as your shadow seems.'

"When I was in bed, and couldn't sleep, the policemen came back to me, and with them the realization of two Germanys. For which Germany had I written this play? Did I not write it for the whole of Germany? Did I not write it with the idea that all our troubles could be solved through pure love? Yet, against the other part of Germany there were policemen. And I had really hoped to convince Father that there were other means than force to solve our troubles! My father had, indeed, brought his heavenly daughter back to earth again.

"The desire to come back to earth, to know what life is, the impossibility of knowing where to grasp it, how to approach it, how to get to it, the desperation of old ways lost without seeing any new way on which I could put my foot, brought me to a kind of nervous breakdown. So little is known of such illness, however, and my mother, for instance, knew nothing at all about it. The doctor said I had a stomach ulcer. Another doctor decided maybe it was the appendix. I was operated on and it was found that the operation was for nothing. After the operation the doctor decided I might have had a nervous breakdown and it would be good for me to leave school

and go out of the city—the thing which I really wanted most and needed most—escape into the country.

“A few days after Lotte’s marriage I went to the peasants. My mother had found an advertisement in one of her home family magazines about a peasant woman looking for company for her daughter, who was about my age. As this advertisement was in one of her home family magazines she thought that it must be a good family and she decided to write. Well, we’ll call this family Meyer. She wrote to Mrs. Meyer. Mrs. Meyer lived near Mecklenburg. She wrote back that she would be delighted to have me. She had a daughter only half a year older than I, and it was settled that I was to go there.

“I came to a little station. I got out of the train, and there stood a girl a bit taller than I—although I was tall, too. She was very erect and healthy with sun-tanned skin, hair really so blonde that it looked like gold in the sun, and she had very blue eyes. The first thing I saw was that she must have made every effort, with her brush, to have her hair very firmly smoothed back, and tied in a knot, and yet everywhere little curls came through as if mocking these efforts. I noticed immediately that her walk had an extreme composure and self-assurance. By the way she walked, I saw immediately that she knew what she was doing. Her look at me was not at all friendly. ‘Are you Miss von Pustau?’ she asked. I said, ‘Yes.’ She said, ‘I am Kathe Meyer. There is our cart, you can go in it.’ It was a horse cart, on which she brought the milk to the station. I had come on the evening milk train.

“Now we want to look at me for a moment, because there I stood, very insecure in myself, looking rather forlorn and lost. So insecure I was that I hardly knew how to tell her that I had my luggage still to get. But finally I managed to get my luggage ticket out of my handbag. She just took the ticket away from me and said, ‘I’ll take care of that,’ and went to the luggage office—while I stood not knowing what to do. The train officer helped her to

get the luggage into the cart. In the meantime, she put four enormous milk cans on the cart. The train officer went away and I still stood where she had left me. Finally she called, 'Well, come along home now.' So rather clumsily I got into the cart, and she took the reins and we drove into the country.

"She did not say one word, and I felt in her not only a reluctance to accept me but a very queer tension that I could not understand. My first thought was 'Well, she doesn't like the look of me!'

"I looked at the country, which was very beautiful, absolutely flat, with green meadows and lots of cows. This Mecklenburg is the country of milk and butter. It was the evening when all comes slowly to peace.

"I sat by her side, and I felt this terrible tension. All at once she said, 'I didn't want you to come here. It was Mother's idea.' I said, 'Well, but you don't know me.' And she said, 'That has nothing to do with it. But you will see for yourself.'

"We came to a very nice, two-story peasant's house of red brick. The window sills and doors were painted a gay green, and a little front yard was full of flowers of all colors. Before this house stood a woman who had absolutely white hair. It was hair like Kathe's which showed the same efforts of the brush and curls coming out everywhere. So I was not surprised when Kathe said, 'That is my mother.'

"The mother helped me get down from the cart and greeted me very kindly, very warmly indeed. For a moment it flashed through my mind that it was amazing to have her hair so white for she couldn't be so old. And then I forgot it, and Kathe went away with the cart to the barn, and her mother led me to my room. It was a very friendly room, all white, with the same green doors and window sills and the most beautiful flowers everywhere so that it was really gay.

"The mother said, 'Well, I hope that you will feel at home here very soon!' I liked her immediately, and so I

said, 'I already feel a bit at home.' Then she said, 'Please hurry, the supper is ready.' At the door she turned back and with one arm around my shoulder led me to the window and let me look out at the country, and she said, 'Isn't it beautiful and peaceful here?' And indeed it was.

"When I came down for supper the mother led me to the dining room. Then, going to a very stout, stern-looking man, she said, 'This is my husband.' This man didn't look at me, he only said, 'Hm, hm.' I was so afraid that I looked down and I saw then that he sat in a wheel chair.

"She presented me then to the farm hands. There were four male farm hands and two maids. Kathe was an only child. The mother said the evening prayer, we folded our hands and looked down. But, being rather curious and not used to evening prayers, I looked and noticed that the master of the house didn't fold his hands, but looked sternly at the wall.

"Then the mother gave everybody a plate with the food. It was wonderful food and there were big glasses of good milk. We still had in the city only skimmed milk but this was real milk with the cream in it. It was a very silent meal.

"Nobody spoke a word, not the mother, nor Kathe, nor the father, nor the farm hands.

"After dinner the mother said, 'Well, Kathe can show you our hill.' This hill was really only ten steps high. But she called it 'our hill.' We came to the top of the hill and sat there on a bank, silent for quite a while. Then Kathe said, 'These are our cows.' I could only see them as shadows, because night was falling. But Kathe said, 'The one with the white mark between the eyes will have a calf soon.' I couldn't make out any cow with a white mark, but Kathe certainly knew her cows very well. Then she told me, 'Last time we got a calf I delivered it myself.' I felt like nothing, because here was a girl who even could deliver calves! I had really nothing to say and could only admire her. So we sat silent again, while the moon came slowly up and one star after another shone in the sky.

"After a while Kathe said, 'You know, we managed quite

well during the war without any men help. We were only women here, but now we have Robert, the head man, and Mother says he must stay, because she thinks it is time that a manly upper hand should come back again.' That sounded familiar, and immediately I felt close to Kathe, since she and I had somewhat the same problems—the manly upper hand must come back, and our mothers were the ones to teach us that.

"I said, 'Well, Kathe, it is queer that you say that. It is just the same in the city, and I am really amazed that it is so here in the country, because during the war everyone said that a woman stands for a man.' I didn't wonder that Mother came back to the old ideas, but I thought that here in the country it would be otherwise, because here women really do the work of the men!

"Kathe didn't answer this. But she was very thoughtful, and again I felt the same tension in her. She said, 'It's time to go to sleep now. I have to get up very early.'

"While I stayed there, I came very close to Kathe's mother. She never asked questions about my parents, about my life, or about anything. It was not that I felt that she was uninterested in it, but that she could not go out of her own circle even to ask questions. And still I was amazed at the discrepancy between her white hair and her wonderful gaiety in which was wisdom and at the same time deep resignation.

"Being asked no questions, I asked none either. This peasant woman was the daughter of a schoolteacher and had had a very good education.

"The next morning I went with her into the chicken house to collect eggs. As I had entered, after about one or two minutes—I don't know how long—I felt myself itching all over my body. Being very well educated, I didn't dare to scratch, but as soon as we had collected the eggs, I excused myself and ran up in my room and wanted to look what was the matter with me. Undressing, I saw that I was full of chicken fleas. Having never had this experience, I felt extremely ashamed about it, naturally, but wetting the

tips of my fingers, I picked them up slowly and threw them into the washbasin. I think I must have picked up at least twenty, when Mrs. Meyer came in without knocking at the door, and I sat there absolutely naked. And she, seeing me, laughed and laughed and laughed and said, 'Well, there is only one expression for this picture—Leda and the Chicken Fleas!'

"I did not come closer to Kathe for about two weeks. Although we many times went up on our hill, she was reserved. But one day she had time in the afternoon and her mother said we should go and see the country. So we took a walk. As I told you, it was very flat country. You could see the horizon far away. While looking at it, I remembered Father, who had called the country the 'paradise of inflation,' and I wondered what the peasants were doing with all their money which we, in the cities, paid them for food. I asked Kathe, 'What do you do with all the money you get?'

" 'We are paying off our mortgages,' she replied.

" 'And do you buy more land?' I asked.

"Kathe shook her head. 'As long as I have lived here no land has been sold. The peasants who sell their land must really be of very low character. No sound peasant would ever sell land.'

"I thought this over and I asked, 'Wouldn't it be more convenient if you had all your land together in one piece?' She said, 'Well, it has come about through centuries, as the land was divided up between the sons.' And then, all at once, she said, 'You know, I was not always the only child. I had five brothers.' I looked at her in silence. And then she said, 'My five brothers were killed during the war.'

" 'Five brothers killed during the war!' I asked, 'But wasn't there a law that some sons could stay at home when so many sons were killed?' She said, 'My father didn't want to take advantage of it, and my brothers wanted to go to the war.'

"To make a long story short, they were killed one by

one during the four years. And she told me, 'When the youngest son fell—the fourth of them—I was in school to get a better education, but I came home because I thought I couldn't leave Mother alone. Mother didn't want me to stay here, and she told me I should go back. I didn't want to go. It was the time of the potato harvest, so she needed every hand. I stayed and during the potato harvest the news came that the last son was killed. When it was over, she said, "Well, as things stand now, you will have this farm, anyhow, later, so you had better stay."'

"And then Kathe said to me, 'That my five brothers were killed was something that seemed very far removed from me. But that this farm should belong to me—to me, a girl—that was such a terrible shock that I wanted to run away. But I could not run away because Mother now wanted me to stay. Now I have learned to consider this as my farm, and now I have worked on it, and through my work, I have the right to have this farm belong to me.'

"I said, 'Is that why you are so against this head man?' She said, 'Mother wants me to marry him.' I said, 'Do you love him?' She said, 'How can I know whether I love him or not? If I should marry him it would be not because I love him, but because this farm needs a manager. How can I love somebody who is supposed to come here as a manager? Even if I could have fallen in love with him, I never can now.'

"Then I tried very cautiously to ask about her father. I said, 'What does your father say to it?' She said, 'My father hasn't spoken with me since my last brother was killed. He shoots. Do you know that he shoots?' Then I remembered that I had heard some shooting but I had looked around and had seen nobody getting excited about it and thought maybe there was hunting going on somewhere. But the sound had been rather near.

"'He has an old gun,' she went on, 'and from time to time he shoots into the ceiling of his room.' I said, 'Isn't that dangerous? Why don't you take the gun away from him?' Then she said, 'I wanted to, but Mother won't. She

says that it is the only outlet he has. You know, he has been paralyzed since the news that the last son was killed, and she thinks if he hasn't even his shooting he will just go absolutely mad.'

"I asked, 'What is he thinking when he shoots?' And Kathe said, 'Well, Mother says he pretends he is shooting at the enemies, but I think he wants to shoot at me because he can't forgive me that I will have the farm.'

"I cried out, 'Oh, there must never be war again!' But Kathe didn't understand that. She said, 'This has nothing to do with war.' And then she returned home with me.

"She did not say one word more and, strangely enough, I thought of my grandmother and her illness, always feeling that it was, maybe, the war, but maybe there was something else, too. And I looked at this land. It looked like a chessboard, divided into small pieces, each piece surrounded by hedges; it was marked as private property, a sign of the people who clung to it, for whom the farm that belonged to them was everything; and out of this private property there had come their conflicts and their laws through centuries upon centuries and they could not escape from this inheritance. It was indeed very clear that Kathe's mind and Kathe's whole being could not get away from the conflict that was rooted in this land that belonged to her.

"I will tell you her story as far as I, myself, learned it through a letter from her, two years later. She did not marry the head man. She fell in love with another farm hand who came the next year, and who only stayed for the season. As she explained in her letter to me, 'I did not fall in love with him, but I just wanted to fall in love.' She got a child by him, a son, and she went away from the farm while she delivered the son, because her mother didn't want her father to know. The season's worker went away without even knowing that she was pregnant.

"And she wrote me in this letter I got from her, 'I think I have found the solution. The farm stays within the family and I am only the keeper for my son. When he is grown



up it will all be as it was before.' She left the child in the country near by with another peasant's family until her father died, which was only half a year later, and then she went for the son.

"This was, I think, the only solution for her. She belonged as much to the farm as the farm belonged to her. She could not escape its laws. It is always amazing to me to see how life follows its pattern—even after changes.

"Well, let us go back to the time of my stay with Kathe. I want you to see her parents more clearly.

"They lived very simply. The mother had a little salon where the furniture was of mahogany. All the other furniture was of unpainted wood. The beds were iron. Only in the little salon of the mother were cushions on the little sofa, and little covers on the table. I think Mr. Meyer must have been from the very beginning a strong and somewhat hard man, because it was certainly he who was responsible for the simplicity that only allowed for the necessary things. She used to have little gay things around her and lived in some air of culture. She read many books.

"She never went to church. Sometimes the minister came. I asked Kathe once how her mother had stood the shock of losing all her sons, and she said, 'Well, for Mother it was easy, she has her belief.' And that was when I said, 'But I never see her go to church.' She said, 'No, she won't leave my father alone, but at the time of church she reads the Bible, and her belief in God is really the thing that gives her strength. I can't share this belief. I think my father is more responsible for the death of my brothers than is the will of God, but my mother is quite satisfied with her belief in God.'

"Kathe, too, went never to church, and this was very strange to me. I asked her why she was so extremely lonely. She had hardly any friends there. She said, 'Well, Mother sent me away to school, so I have not many school friends here—but also the peasants are afraid of us.' And when I asked her why, she said, 'Well, they withdrew from us gradually when all my brothers were killed.' I said, 'Do

you think they are so superstitious?' She said, 'It isn't that they are superstitious—that would be too much. But they are afraid. Earlier they might have said, "There is evil in this house," but now the only thing is that they are afraid. Maybe they don't know just how to behave. I don't know.'

"I received letters from Mother and Father. In each of his letters Father asked, 'How do you like the paradise of inflation?' Well, I liked it, yet it was very strange for me, who came from the city where all was going down, to see how good times came back to the peasants. They really started life again. True, they did it at the expense of the cities; they did it by paying off their mortgages in devaluated marks; they did it by price increases for which we had to pay. But I thought of the city mostly when I received Father's letter, and I forgot all about it when Kathe showed me the new barn or when she spoke about her cows. They had had twenty-two cows before the war; during the war they had come down to eight because they could not get enough fodder and had to slaughter them. Now they were up to sixteen cows again and they hoped, in two more years, to be up to twenty-two.

I stayed there for ten weeks. During the harvest I liked it because I had a job which gave me my first feeling of self-importance. I had to sit on the horse's back and drive the empty cart to the field and the loaded cart back to the barn. The horses could find their way without my leading them, but somebody had to be with them, so I felt extremely important. My muscles were sore since sitting on a horse's back for a whole day is rather difficult. In the evening I limped around, but I was proud.

"This time of the harvest was the only time I saw the father take any interest in what went on. He had his wheel chair put at the window so that he could see the loaded carts. He did not speak. The only persons to whom he spoke, in fact, and never at the mealtimes, were his wife and the head man, Robert. But at this time the farm hands were so conscious of their value that they talked at meal-

times. We had loud and gay meals, very different from the other times when all was so silent.

"After the harvest I went back to Hamburg. I felt strong again and I was set upon keeping my self-assurance against Mother. I wanted to do something, to work, to learn. I wanted to build with my hands. I did not want to think. I did not want to be faced with conflicts which were too big for me to solve. I wanted to have peace. I wanted, with peace, to become financially independent, too. But my foremost thought was to do something with my hands to earn my living, not to be bothered with conflicts too great for me, and to live in peace."

‘W’ITH such an idea in mind, I went back to the city. Well, coming from the country, the very sight of the city brought me down. It was not only that in a city you have no air and no wide view. It was that the houses showed the decline. Nobody could think of painting a house, of renewing anything but the most urgent for safety’s sake. The people in the city looked gloomy and worried. There was no gaiety in the city. The talk in the family was about prices going up, about the credits which had to be reduced, about the middle-class party, about big business and the workers who always asked for more. It was really like coming back to another world. The contrast between country and city was so enormous that it cannot be understood by people who have not lived through it. And to think that the same now happens again; not only in Germany, but this time all over Europe!

“Well, I had made up my mind to do something. Mother asked me if I wanted to learn sewing. Well, I thought, that may be as good as any other thing. So I said yes. And I, wanting to have peace, left it to Mother to decide about my training in sewing. I didn’t tell her that I intended to earn my living with it. Mother, having her goals in mind, thought it would be enough if I knew how to sew a little. If I married I could sew for the children. So she spoke with her dressmaker—and decided I should go to her as an apprentice. Well, I thought, one way is just as good as the other. I wanted more to go to a real school to learn. But—well, this dressmaker earned her living, so why couldn’t I learn from her?

"I went to this dressmaker. It was nearing autumn and the mothers began to think of their daughters' dresses for the season. The mode that year was little ruffles and so morning by morning the dressmaker gave me long strips of fine material on which I had to make a very fine rolled seam. Every morning she gave me this work with the same phrase, 'Here is some fine work. That is work for you, Miss von Pustau.' And I wondered when I would be permitted to learn something else.

"There was another apprentice, a worker's daughter. The dressmaker just called her Anita. One day when the dressmaker was out I asked Anita, 'Please tell me, how long did you have to do this silly work before you could learn other things?' She looked at me doubtfully as if I were joking. But she finally decided I was quite honest and said, 'I never got that fine work.' At first I couldn't understand, then I grasped the meaning. So here I was, Miss von Pustau, and the privilege I got out of that name was that I had to do work which would never enable me to earn my living!

"That same afternoon, after Anita had left, I said to the dressmaker, 'I want really to learn sewing, and I want to be treated just like any other apprentice.'

"It was of no use. Mother was her customer and customers are always right. She said, 'You have to take up this question with your mother first.' So I had to speak to Mother about it.

"Coming home, I went to Mother and had the courage to say to her, 'Mother, it can't go on as it has. I really want to learn sewing so that I can earn my living. Please tell your dressmaker that I want to learn the real things.'

"Mother looked at me doubtfully, and with a somewhat queer meaning I couldn't quite understand. Then she said, 'Do you really want to earn your living?' I said, 'Yes, that is what I want.' She said, 'Give me a few days' time and then, I promise you, we will find a solution.' I was very glad about this and wholeheartedly I agreed to give her

some days to think it over, since I knew that Mother at this time was very busy.

"Well, Mother was a member of a new committee. This committee later was to be well known under the name of 'The Committee for Germans Abroad.' The Nazis later used this organization as propaganda organization abroad and, probably, as spy organization. At its beginning this committee looked rather innocent and that is why I speak about it here to show you how carefully we have to watch everything. Why, I was nearly caught myself in this matter of the Committee for Germans Abroad. It looked like some kind of patriotic charity organization; it appealed to both patriotic and charity sentiments. Yet its initiators had from the very beginning military aggressive intentions in their mind. Please note that I say in their 'mind,' because they did not speak them out openly. As for their followers, they could grasp their intentions—if they wanted to. It is extremely difficult to draw a clear-cut line between the conscious and the half-conscious things.

"When Mother joined this organization she did it as a woman would go into a charity organization. In this case, the charity dealt with the Germans abroad. They had been cut off from their fatherland during the war. They lived in the countries of our former enemies, in our lost colonies, in the British, French, Belgian colonies, in England, in America, in fact, all over the world. They had suffered for the Fatherland and it was, therefore, the duty of the Fatherland to help them. 'Unfortunately,' so Mother said, 'we cannot help them financially. Our inflated mark would be of no use to them. Yet, we could help them spiritually. We could let them know, through signs of good will, that their country cares about them. We could re-weave the ties between them and us through our common language and our common culture.'

"The first act of this committee was a drive to collect German books which were to be sent abroad and a campaign to find German families who were willing to take children of Germans abroad into their homes, so that they

could be educated in Germany. Mother was to write a little pamphlet for this drive which was to deal exclusively with German culture—with Luther's Bible, with Kant and Goethe, with Grimm's fairy tales for the children. No politics were to be mentioned.

"This I knew, and I thought that Mother worked, indeed, for a good cause. Well, she was writing this pamphlet. At first she was quite enthusiastic, proudly telling us that she was 'getting along well.' Yet, as she had never before written a pamphlet, she soon sighed, 'It is more difficult than I thought it was.' And one day she came to me and said, 'You can write so nicely. Couldn't you write this pamphlet for me? If you can write it to our satisfaction I will certainly be able to give you a job in the office of the Committee for Germans Abroad, and you can thus earn your living.'

"It was a tremendous temptation! There I was, rolling seams at the dressmaker's and with no hope of learning how to earn my living. Here now Mother offered me a job and all I had to do was the very thing I most wanted to do—to write about our German culture which was so dear to me.

"I promised to write this pamphlet. And I sat at my desk, biting my penholder. It must have been ages since I last sat at his desk trying to write a play, but realizing that I did not yet know enough of the realities of life. And in the drawer of the same desk was my play which had been performed at school. So I could not help remembering that 'evening of glory' when, after the performance, Father brought his heavenly daughter back to earth, and when I saw the policemen and had realized so clearly the existence of two Germanys.

"I began to feel extremely uneasy. Is culture really so nonpolitical as it is supposed to be? Could it not be used, or rather misused, for political aims quite different from the intentions of its creators? Who wanted to use our culture? Which part of Germany? For what purpose? I felt my uneasiness growing.

"I began to remember how all this talk about the Committee for Germans Abroad had really started in our home. In the early spring Mother had come home from a meeting of the German Far East Asia Club. She had been very excited because there had been a speech by a German missionary who had just come back from Africa and who had explained how lost the Germans in the colonies were now and how difficult their situation was. I even laughed, thinking back to that evening when Mother told her story. We had red cabbage for dinner, which Father always detested. Then, while Mother spoke so beautifully and excitedly about spiritual needs, Father interrupted her, 'But the cabbage could have been done better. It is terribly salty and it is not quite done enough.' Mother only looked at him and said, 'How can you speak about such things when spiritual needs are at stake?' And my father said, 'Well, those needs I leave to your missionary.' Mother said, 'And think what a wonderful man he is! He was with the Lettow-Vorbeck unit.' This was a unit of young adventurous men who lived in Africa when the war broke out. They had formed their unit under their leader, Lettow-Vorbeck, had put up quite a fight, and had been able to escape imprisonment during the entire war. Mother said that even the British had admired them.

"But were the 'heroes' of the war the best guarantee for lasting peace, today? Sitting at my desk, I remembered, too, what Father had replied to Mother. 'I don't think that the British will give the colonies back just to please them,' he had said.

"I think that Mother got here the first idea that behind this committee was the hope of getting the colonies back. She really had taken the words at their face value. But you could see on her face that she didn't want to think it over. For a few moments she looked a bit upset, but you could see how she pushed the idea away.

"Now, in thinking these things over, and not being able to write before I could see clearly, I decided to go to Mother and ask her directly. I went to her room. She was



reading the newspaper. When I came into the room, she hardly looked up. I said, 'Mother, I want to ask you a question.' She said, 'What do you want?' I said, 'Are you sure that Black-White-Red ideas are not involved in this pamphlet?' Black-White-Red, I must explain, was the old flag which was changed by the Republic, and a symbol for the old monarchistic imperialistic Germany. Mother said, 'No! There are only cultural matters. Now don't ask me such silly questions.' I said, 'But, Mother, the German Far East Asia Club are businessmen. They wouldn't put money only into cultural things. They have their purposes.' Mother said, 'Don't you think it is only natural that they want to have their trade back?' I said, 'I have nothing against it as long as their trade confines itself to coffee and tea. But if they want to export Black-White-Red ideas, I wouldn't write for them.'

"Mother was becoming rather impatient. 'Well, don't worry about that,' she said. 'There is nothing wrong with this committee.' I still wasn't satisfied, and I said, 'But, Mother, you see this missionary has lost his job; it is only natural that he wants to go back. And maybe he wants the colonies back, and you know that we can't have them back without a war.'

"Then Mother said, 'Don't you think it quite natural that we want our colonies back?' I said, 'Well, I don't know what to answer. I don't want a war for it. Let the British have our colonies. I think it is all right that we have none.'

"She said, 'You know that I am on this new committee. If I am not guarantee enough for you that it is not misused for national propaganda and for Black-White-Red, I can't help you.' And I said, 'Mother, you are not enough guarantee for me.'

"I felt that I was white in my face, I was so frightened. But I saw for the first time that she, who called herself a democrat, was not a guarantee against the new national propaganda that was rising.

"Well, I have said I have divided the period into in-

flation, and disintegration, and the building of the fronts. Here was between my mother and me a building of the fronts. I had not wanted it. I had wanted to live in peace without being faced with conflicts. But it was not possible. I could not write the pamphlet.

"I wanted to leave home. I wanted to learn something which would enable me to earn my living soon. I gave up my sewing and decided to take up typing and shorthand.

"I spoke with Father. He immediately said, 'Yes, that is an excellent idea. You can do that. I will pay the tuition for you. But I tell you one thing, I won't take you into my business, you are too stupid for that'—which was one way not only to express my stupidity, but the feeling of insecurity that he, too, had in this new times. You know, he really loved me! He called me stupid when he loved me most. Mother just ignored my presence. Our meals were extremely uncomfortable. But Father had a very nice way. He wanted peace at home, too. So he spoke with Mother at the meals, but never with me. After he got up, he always told a joke to show me before escaping from the room that he was all right. But that was all he dared do."

"And there only were three of you at home?" I asked.

"Just the three of us," she replied.

She looked across the room, her eyes dark with pain. "This feeling of doom," she went on, "this gloomy life—it is very hard to imagine here in America, how it feels for young people to have no perspective, to have no hope left, to live where people are always worried, where they are crying, even a gay laughter seems impossible in such an atmosphere. And all around it was the same picture—of people who had no hope, who were so without perspective, without joy, without happiness. It was quite different from the days of the revolution when we had hope that things would be better.

"Do you remember the days of revolution, when we were so eager to do something, to make this new world and all our wonderful slogans come true? One day coming

home from the business school I met a girl who had been, like myself, a delegate in the school parliament.

" 'Hello,' she said. 'Hello,' I said. We looked at one another and we laughed and said, 'You, too?' 'You, too?' We had looked at one another from head to foot, and we both wore the same broad shoes with flat heels. These shoes were a 'symbol' of woman's emancipation, a protest against women's role of being a pleasure for men to look at, of seeing the whole meaning of women's life only to please men! So we wore these rather ugly but very solid shoes. And immediately we had a very good contact through these shoes. She told me, 'Oh, I have been thinking of you.' I said, 'I am glad someone remembers me.' And she said, 'Do you remember the school parliament days?' I said, 'Well, I remember—it's long ago.' She said, 'But you know, next semester I am going to a new school, and many of the ideas of this school parliament, and your ideas, are realized there.' Somehow I couldn't believe it, but she said, 'Well, yes, it is the Lichtwark School for girls and boys together. There are Jews and non-Jews. There is no discrimination against anybody. There are workers' children and children from better families. And the idea is that here democracy shall be taught, that people from all classes and strata of the population shall come together.' It sounded just wonderful! I couldn't believe that such a thing could still happen in our doomed world.

"She said, 'Why don't you see for yourself? Every guest who wants to see the school is welcome.'

"I wanted very much to see this school, but I was afraid to go. I did not want to be disillusioned again. I felt like an old woman, too tired to try something new again, and I kept myself from having any new hope.

"Yet my unrest was too great. One morning, instead of going to the business school, I went to the Lichtwark School."

"How old were you then?" I asked.

"I was eighteen years old—a bit too old for school."

"Still young," I said.

"But I didn't feel young," she retorted. "I used to say I felt like a sixty-year-old woman. I used to have pictures—now I have none of them left—really, I looked like an old woman without life in her face.

"Well, the Lichtwark School from outside looked like any other public school, the typical red brick building. I hesitated before the door. Should I go in? Now that I was here my courage left. But then I thought of Berthe, who had such a wonderful slogan for all these situations. In English, it would be 'Get it off your chest,' but in German it is 'Do it so that your dear soul can rest.'

"So, with Berthe's slogan, I went into the school entrance. At the right side of the corridor was a window, with a janitor. I knocked at the window. The janitor opened. I said, 'I want to visit the school.' The janitor came out as if that were a very common thing. He went round the corner of the corridor, and he soon came back with a teacher and said, 'This is Dr. Haffner.' I was so afraid that I hardly looked up. I gave my name, then said that I wanted to see the school.

"Dr. Haffner had a very abrupt manner of speaking. He said, 'Do you want to see or listen, take part in an hour of lessons, or in what are you most interested?' I said, 'Oh, it doesn't matter.' He said, 'I am just going to give a German literature lesson. If you are interested you can go with me.' I said, 'I would enjoy that very much.'

"He went out of the entrance I had just come in; and around the building. Behind the building was a play yard, and a long line of one-story wooden barracks, very roughly made. In these barracks were classrooms. We entered a room. There was a little round stove, very primitive; roughly made wooden benches and walls that were painted with a screaming green, very violent, while the benches and tables were painted blue. Well, that was a very queer picture for a school!

"The class got up as the teacher came in. Dr. Haffner called, 'Schaefer, Schaefer!' There came a small boy with a very sharp and thin face. Even at first sight I could see

that he was Jewish. He jogged his head so, like a bird. Still he looked very nice and very natural in the way he acted.

"Then Haffner said, 'Here is a guest who wants to visit us. Please give her a seat and help her.'

"We went to an empty bench and Haffner went to his teacher's desk.

"I want to tell you about the first lesson in the Lichtwark School because it was really luck that this was the first lesson I had there. The theme of this German literature hour was a drama by Gerhardt Hauptmann, called *The Weavers*. I knew this drama as literature. But now I learned to see it as history.

"Haffner asked, 'Well, who will tell me something about *The Weavers*?' A girl snapped her fingers and began, '*The Weavers* deals with the time when most of the workers were still working at home with their own production means, getting paid for the piece and not for working hours.'

"That was in the play, but I had never seen it from this standpoint of a certain time, a certain period.

" 'Well,' Haffner said to the girl, 'go on, go on.'

"She went on, 'But mechanical weaving machines were invented which produced more and cheaper than the old machines and the old entrepreneurs and the poor home workers were going down through the competition of this new machine.'

" 'Very good,' Haffner said. 'Go on.'

"A boy went on and said, in a rather gruff voice, 'The capitalists wanted to exploit their workers even more.'

" 'Very well,' Haffner said. 'But why did they want to? Were they just bad people?'

"This boy, who seemed to have a terrible grudge against the capitalists, kept silent, but he sat there with a very hostile face.

"Another girl said, 'They thought their only chance to survive was to get more work from the workers for less pay.'

“ ‘And what did the workers say to that?’ Haffner asked. ‘Didn’t they object?’

“Another girl snapped her fingers. Haffner said, ‘Kassel, go on.’

“The girl Kassel went on, ‘They did object. They tried to speak with their masters; they demonstrated. Only when they saw no other way out, they destroyed the new machines and burned the factories.’ This girl had a very soft voice and her skin looked pale and unhealthy.

“Haffner asked the class at large, ‘And was this a solution?’

“There was silence. Then one boy, who looked as though he came from a well-to-do family rather than from a simple worker’s family, said, ‘No, it was not. I would call it a natural human reaction on the side of the workers just as it was a natural human reaction on the side of the entrepreneurs to lower the wages. Both means were unreasoning as all natural human reactions are.’

“He spoke in a very wise tone. I soon learned that his name was Bayer, and I learned, too, that here girls and boys alike were addressed by their family names, without any Mr. or Miss. This was at first very strange to me, but I guess ‘equality between the sexes’ has to be learned gradually.

“This boy Bayer seemed to be hated by the boy with the hostile face. He looked even more hostile now, and he asked in a challenging voice, ‘Don’t you think that the workers were within their rights?’

“I was interested. I saw at once that here was quite another approach to history than that of battles, dates, kings. This history seemed to explain many things of today, too. Here was the economic process and the people’s reaction to it. And the way these pupils spoke—so frankly and openly! And there were all kinds of people in this class. Then the bell rang and Schaefer said to me, ‘Do you want to see the school?’ I said, ‘Yes, very much.’ He said, ‘You know, I am president of the class for this semester. Every semester the

class elects one of us.' That was a wonderful thing to me, too—a class electing its president.

"We went out of the classroom, and I must have been looking somewhat wonderingly at the barracks, for this boy asked immediately, 'How do you like our barracks?' I said, 'Well, I like them but I am still wondering. It is somehow queer for a school.' Then he said, 'You know, this school was only a school for the lower grades. After the revolution it was made into a high school. We needed more classes and there was not enough room in the building and since this school is a poor school and has not much money, we have these barracks, and we, the pupils, painted them and helped with the carpentry work.' He sounded so wonderfully proud and you could see he was really tied to this school with his whole being.

"I have told you of the gloomy atmosphere in which I lived, of the sense of being doomed. Now you must see what this school meant to me. Here was something positive, here was something I had always wanted, and here were the kind of people I always wanted to meet.

"It was not easy to make up my mind, but that I had to do before I told my parents—and I would continue to be dependent on them. Yet, all at once, this seemed no longer to be so important, just as Mother seemed no longer of such overwhelming importance to me. I felt no more alone. I had found people who wanted to answer the same questions as I.

"Yes, I made up my mind to go to this school, if I could get my parents' permission. I felt such a new strength within me that I knew I had to get the permission one way or the other. I waited until my business course was completed. I got an excellent report, one which could make a sound impression upon Father. I spoke with him first. He happened to be in a soft mood. It was a time when inflation had again slowed down a bit and in those weeks of respite he was always softer.

"'How long will it take you?' he asked me.

"I said, 'Two years.' He said, 'I can't promise anything but that I can hold out as long as the inflation goes on.'

"Mother was disgusted. 'Coeducation! A Red school! There are Socialists, maybe there are Communists, and there are Jews.' 'But, Mother, there are Jews—you say that?' I cried. Mother flushed and said, 'Well, it doesn't matter. I didn't mean that. I only meant that it is a Red school and it is coeducational and I don't want you to go there.'

"Now I used a political blackmail. Mother had great difficulties. She was still a member of the Committee for Woman's Emancipation which was affiliated with the Democratic party, and at the same time she was a member of the Committee for Germans Abroad, which already showed signs of being very reactionary. The Democratic Woman's Committee at that time made a leaflet which had not Mother's name on it, and she was not even asked to sign. This hurt her. She complained about it to Father. He said, 'Well, you can't sit on two chairs at the same time even in politics.'

"Mother said, 'But the difference is in internal things. The Democrats are for the Republic, and the others are for the old kind of Kaiserreich, but so far as our nation is concerned, in their relations with the outside world, our politics are the same.'

" 'No,' he said, 'it is not the same. The Foreign Minister Rathenau is a member of the Democratic party, and the reactionaries hate Rathenau. They fight against him with means fair and unfair, and you can't wait for those who belong to Rathenau to understand why you sit at the same table with the worst enemies of Rathenau.'

"Well, in this struggle I saw my chance. I went openly to Mother and I said, 'Mother, if you don't let me go to the Lichtwark School, I shall speak to your friends of the Woman's Committee and tell them that you have forbidden me.' One of the backers of this school was a Democratic senator of Hamburg for whom Mother had a high admiration, especially since she had sat at his table



at a great Democratic dinner. She felt very proud of having sat beside a senator. She was extremely worried but she was smart. To my great amazement I heard her call up one of the women of the Women's Committee and say, 'Your attitude against me is based on a deep misunderstanding. Would I allow my daughter to go to the Lichtwark School if I were against the ideas of democracy?' I knew then that I was going to the Lichtwark School. She had not given me the permission yet, but she already used it for her own purpose. Well, that is how I came to the Lichtwark School.

"It may interest you that I learned only recently from a newspaper that one of the teachers of this school has survived Hitler and has now been appointed minister of education in Hamburg by the British. And there were even some comments about the progressive Lichtwark School of former times.

"Then a wonderful thing happened. Our whole class was going to take a trip through Germany. For four weeks we would live together—far away from our parents. School trips were our principal's idea. 'By this trip,' he said, 'we pursue two different goals. One is to broaden and deepen the purely academic teaching through your own experiences. The second goal, closest to my heart, we cannot achieve immediately. It is to have our school serve in a better understanding between the nations of this world. I therefore hope in the not too distant future that you will be able to see foreign countries and get acquainted with other peoples. This is, however, apart from all political considerations, out of the question now because of the inflation. We can't go beyond our borders with our money. But I think you will discover enough interesting and as yet unknown sights in your own country, if you know where to look.'

"Our enthusiasm was unanimous. We became one class, one excitement—and one worry; where and how would we get the money for the trip? Alternately we laughed and let our heads hang. We discussed the route,

tried to figure out the cost, and then our hearts became heavy again. In three days Dr. Haffner told us the exact route and the cost. During these three days I did not even mention the trip at home, but now the time had come to ask for my parents' permission. I foresaw their refusal, yet I had to overcome it.

"I had barely mentioned the trip, when Mother exclaimed: 'Are you going to tell me you intend to travel with boys?' 'Yes,' I said and my heart sank into my shoes. With all my financial worries I had not anticipated this argument. 'You'll never get my permission,' she announced.

"Father came to my rescue. 'How much will it cost?' 'Seven hundred and fifty marks,' I replied, and it sounded frightfully high to me. 'Hmm,' said Father, and only after he had held me in suspense long enough for his own amusement, he continued: 'At today's prices, that means twenty pounds of turbot. And how long can you stay away with that sum?' 'Four weeks,' I replied. 'Four weeks,' Father marveled. Then turning to Mother, he said: 'Well, let her go. We'll never be able to get rid of her for so long again for so little money.'

"Mother bit her lips yet remained silent. I couldn't believe that the permission was already in my pocket. Father, however, seemed to take it for granted. All he still wanted to know was how we were going to perform that feat with so little money. We both laughed. Out of sheer joy and gratitude, I even proposed that I would stop eating turbot for a whole year. Father accepted this proposal immediately and he saw to it that turbot was indeed served at my last dinner at home. He ate his share with great relish. I kept to my promise; I proudly ate potatoes and salad without turbot. As a reward I received the seven hundred and fifty marks for the trip and even fifty additional marks for my personal use. 'I won't pay any debts and I won't send any more money,' he said. 'I don't want to see you again in less than four weeks. That is our agreement.'

"On the morning of June tenth, 1922, I marched to the station with a heavy knapsack on my back.

"I pushed the straps higher on my shoulders. 'If only I can keep pace with my classmates!' I thought involuntarily. The class would laugh at me or would say: 'Of course she can't take it, she's too spoiled.' I hastened my steps. I was not the first one at the station. I could see Eddie's crop of strikingly blond hair from far away. He was the boy who had such a terrible grudge against the capitalists. 'For heaven's sake,' he greeted me with a good-natured laugh, 'you are already collapsing under your sack.'

"'During the war, I used to carry heavier ones home,' I boasted. They all grinned, full of understanding. Unwittingly I had hit upon an experience common to all of us, for at that time, we all had bought black-market food in the country.

"Then Dr. Haffner arrived and our trip began.

"We saw many cities, looked at the architecture of centuries ago, and learned of the history that lay behind our culture.

"Then we wandered for days in the depths of the Black Forest. The greater distance we walked from the cities, the more primitive became the hostels.

"One night at dusk we arrived at the little village of Calw, deep in the Black Forest.

"The next day no Haffner appeared.

"We did our chores and waited. Haffner was not yet in sight. Stumpe was ordered to tell him to hurry. We waited for another quarter of an hour. Neither Haffner nor Stumpe appeared.

"Then we saw Stumpe come back—alone. He stopped at the door and said: 'Rathenau has been assassinated.'

"Rathenau was not the first minister of our republic to be assassinated. We didn't know the murderers' names; yet we knew they were our own countrymen; they were the men of the Free Corps, officially dissolved a long time ago, but unofficially still at large, shielded by the Reichswehr, against whom the government didn't dare or want

to intervene. We sat there at our tables; we felt lost and surrounded. We had wandered to this remotest corner in order to learn all about Germany; now we seethed with unrest and wanted to know how things looked in Germany this very day. The Republic just couldn't take this new murder calmly. A cry of outrage was bound to be heard throughout our country. Yet everything was quiet in this forsaken village. No one came to listen to our indignation. The solid dark woods seemed unreal, almost like a dream, and to think of Germany was like a nightmare.

" 'A devil is on the loose in our country,' Eddie said in a gloomy voice. It sent shivers down our spines.

"It seemed like madness to think of war instead of enjoying our delicious sandwiches. We all thought of war. Rathenau had been the symbol of our will to come to peaceful terms with the other nations. He had been murdered in order to destroy this symbol and those who had killed him never concealed their aim: a war of revenge.

"We all knew this. Our knowledge was a burden which was too heavy for us to bear. We were young. Our youth had been loaded with hardship and evil. Now we wanted to live to the full; to live without the burden of events in which we had no part, yet whose consequences kept hitting us ever anew; which turned our youth into a reproach against us, our frustration into accusation.

"Eddie started eating sandwiches.

" 'I can't help it, they taste good despite everything,' he remarked with a deep sigh.

"That evening I went for a walk. I wanted to be alone and think about Haffner's speech at dinner. He had said, 'A clash between the two forces in our country is bound to come and you will have to side, one way or the other.' I worried whether there was really no other solution left.

"Bayer, the boy whose trousers were always perfectly pressed, met me on the road and stepped in with me, without even asking permission.

"Bayer said, 'A penny for your thoughts.'

" 'I wonder,' I said, 'why Haffner is so skeptical. He

should believe in arguments instead of struggle for power.' Bayer replied now in his cool and arrogant voice, 'The power always belongs to those who have the will to fight for it with all the means at their disposal.'

"I was deeply bewildered. How was it possible that a boy only seventeen years old, and a pupil of our Lichtwark School, could have such a conception of power and speak about it in so detached a way on the very day when Rathenau was murdered? I asked him, 'Do you really mean to say that anyone has the right to kill, to deprive a human being of his right to live his own life?'

"Bayer said, scornfully and with bitterness, 'Live his own life! Who ever lives his own life?' And all at once he began to tell me of himself and of his home.

"His father had been a very wealthy man, before the war. He had been technical adviser for big firms in backward countries—Spain, the Balkans—so he had often been away. But when he came home, life had always been wonderful. You could hear in Bayer's voice—which was no longer cool and detached—the admiration he must have had for his father. And then came the war. His father had been in Germany at that time, had been drafted, and had gone to war. Then, he was demobilized, but the countries abroad had found other advisers for their industrial development. And now Bayer's father was but a small clerk in a bank, gambling a bit with foreign valuta to bolster his small income.

"While Bayer spoke, I recognized the story of so many of my generation. Our fathers had ceased to be big and heroes. The idols of our childhood were gone, not because we had outgrown them in our way and at our time, but because of the world around us which neither we nor our fathers could shape. Our fathers were no longer our natural leaders. We would pity them or despise them. We would try to be our own guides; we would be proud of it, or defiant, or arrogant, or we would look around for a leader, any leader at all, and we would follow him if

only he would promise to take our too heavy burden and our too great responsibility away from us.

"Before we separated at our barn, which was carefully divided in a boy's wing and a girl's wing, he kissed me good night. And he was the first boy who had ever kissed me. So, I fell in love with him and his name was Wolfgang.

"Next morning, Haffner brought bad news. 'Panic on the stock exchange,' he reported. 'Yesterday, one dollar was worth eight hundred marks. Today it will reach one thousand.' One dollar a thousand marks! We had become used to the hundreds—now it would be thousands. Haffner went on: 'Prices will go up, and our money will run short. We must hurry home.'

"There it was again: hurry home. Just as we had to hurry home from vacation, when war broke out in August, 1914. But this was not war; this was called peace. The Nazis later called our time the time of a new 'Thirty Years' War, beginning in 1914.

"None of us wanted to hurry home. Yet none of us stood up to object. And I? How was I to come back to Father, who did not want to see me again in less than four weeks! But there it was. We had figured out the cost of our trip over and over again. We had been so sure that we had not overlooked one single item. Yet we had overlooked one—we had not added 'politics' to the list of items in our budget.

"Haffner, in an almost apologetic voice, broke the silence: 'Well, let's wait and see. Maybe by tonight panic will calm down. We'll have to get to the railway, anyhow, before we can return home.'

"His words relieved us at least of the responsibility of making an immediate decision. We ate our breakfast, packed our belongings together, and started to march to the nearest railway station.

"We traveled for thirty hours before reaching Hamburg. When we arrived we were dirty, hungry, and tired. But we had lived together, we had had so much in com-

mon; now we separated, each one of us returning to his home and his own life.

"Mother was glad to have me back safely, although she exclaimed as soon as she saw me, 'I knew all the time that something terrible was going to happen.'

"I found that this did not relate to Rathenau's assassination or to inflation, but to my hair, which I had dared to bob while away from home. Fortunately, she forgot all about it when she saw me limping into my room. I had to show her my feet, which looked frightfully bad with their open blisters. I took a hot bath—it was simply marvelous. I fell into my bed while Mother brought the tray with my dinner. It was home until we started speaking together. I am sure we both wanted to find each other, to be mother and child and nothing else. Yet we could not. We were on guard, cautiously considering every word before we spoke, avoiding all the matters on which we disagreed. I felt Mother's depression and I wanted to prove to her that I was grateful for all her kindness. Thus, I promised her I'd visit Hilde during my vacation. 'There must be something wrong. Maybe you could find out the reason,' she said.

"I did not like the idea of visiting Hilde and Robert or of spending any time with the Junkers. I did not want to be separated from Wolfgang for any length of time.

"Sometimes I think I even wanted to give Wolfgang up at that moment, if only I could live at home, peacefully, yet hold faithfully to my political convictions and to those of my teachers and comrades at school. But immediately after I had agreed to go to Hilde, Mother changed completely. She sighed with relief, then she took the tray and said in her cool, impersonal voice: 'Well, I hope that your trip has finally convinced you that you don't belong to them. Even your feet should show you that you are much too cultured for their kind of living. You were not made for it; if you would eventually have to leave this shelter, you would never really become one of them.'

"With that, she left the room. I took her words for what they were: an offer and a threat. So I would have to leave this shelter, eventually. Maybe it would hurt my soft feet and my body; maybe I would go hungry and have to work hard; maybe I would even die—but I would be able to save my soul. And Mother was wrong; I would not be alone. The others would show me how to heal blisters and how to earn my living; and although we would be of different stock, we would share the same opinions; sometimes we would laugh at each other or misunderstand each other, but at the bottom, we would always tolerate each other. Mother was wrong again. I would never be alone. I had found Wolfgang, and Wolfgang was in love with me, and he simply could not be in love with me if he were not on our side and if he did not share our opinions—or so I thought. I was glad I had told Mother nothing about him. It was my secret which Mother could not destroy. It freed me of the fear of the day when I would have to leave this shelter. It enabled me to get used to that idea, to prepare for that day. Yes, I still am glad I kept my secret. It may sound strange, but it is true. I could only face that day alone, after I got used to facing it at all.

"Well, I cannot finish our trip through Germany without mentioning the turbot. Father relieved me of my promise to go without eating turbot for a whole year. 'Inflation,' he said, 'swallows the value of the mark quicker than you can eat fish.' He was right, for the cost of my trip had shrunk from twenty pounds of turbot to ten pounds. There simply was no sense in saving at all.

"As I had promised Mother, I went to visit Hilde and Robert. And I could see immediately that there was really something wrong with them. So I started to find out the reason.

"First, however, I want to tell you something about the estate upon which they lived. It was typical for eastern Germany. The Junker, the master, to whom the estate belonged, lived in the 'new castle,' while Robert and Hilde



lived in the 'old castle.' This was a large two-story building. I never learned how many rooms it really had since one entire wing was closed up. It was surrounded on three sides by woods, so that you could neither see the new castle nor the farm hands' settlement. The farm hands had been freed from serfdom more than a century ago; yet they were still too poor to make use of their freedom. From generation to generation they stayed on this estate, the same families and the same masters. They were paid mostly in kind, getting shelter, a small piece of land, and their food. The cash they got was small and they used it for clothes and the men used it to drink, as Robert told me.

"Robert, as you know, had wanted to modernize the Junkers. This Junker had received a big loan from the Agricultural Bank and Robert was supposed to see to it that this loan was used for the modernization of the estate. Yet the first thing the Junker did was to buy an expensive car! I could see that Robert was not on good terms at all with his Junker. I asked him, 'But aren't the farm hands on your side? They ought to like new machines so that their work isn't so hard.' Robert looked at me and said, 'You are silly—they do whatever their master wants and they don't respect me.'

"He was squeezed between the Junker and the farm hands, just as the middle class in the cities was squeezed in between big business and the workers. Only, here in the country you could see it.

"While I was there, I saw Robert take his revenge against both sides. Hilde had her first baby and she had a maid to help her, Lena, a farm hand's daughter. One morning, this maid's eyes were red from crying. I asked Hilde, 'What is the matter with Lena today?' Hilde, shrugging her shoulders, said, 'Oh, nothing!' When I insisted, she said, 'Oh, well, Robert just gave her lover a good beating, with a horsewhip.'

"I was enraged and cried, 'How dare Robert do such a thing?' Hilde said, 'Why not? Her lover is a farm

hand's son and he tried to climb into Lena's room last night. If Robert were to tolerate that he would have no authority.' I said, 'If he tries to get authority with the whip, he will be hated but not be respected.' Hilde only shrugged her shoulders.

"Two days later Robert nearly drowned the Junker's son, a boy fifteen years old. Robert had seen this boy ride a young horse that was not yet ready to be ridden. So he took this son to the water basin and plunged him in until he was nearly drowned.

"Robert was of a good family, one of the very best, Mother had said, yet he acted so brutally. You might say now that this is a result of the war and war certainly wrecks all inhibitions against the use of brutal force, inhibitions which centuries of culture and civilization have built up within us. But it was partly, too, the whole atmosphere on this big estate, so laden with resentment and hatred that you could feel it everywhere you went.

"But what was wrong between Hilde and Robert? For one thing, Hilde sided with the Junker. She had only shrugged her shoulders when Robert gave Lena's lover a beating, but she was terribly upset when Robert nearly drowned the Junker's son. And here is a queer thing—Hilde had been on good terms with the Junker's wife, who refused to see her now because Robert had treated her son so badly. Hilde found the reaction of the Junker's wife right, although she had to suffer from it. Her thinking, her feelings and emotions were much the same as those of the Junkers were, and she accepted their ways without questioning.

"This was a constant source of quarrel between her and Robert. And there was still another thing.

"Robert wanted to enjoy life; it was so much more sensible to spend the money than to save it. Time and again, he invited Hilde to go with him to Berlin and have fun. Hilde always refused. Finally he gave up—not his trips to Berlin but asking Hilde to accompany him. While I was there, he went to Berlin for two days. When he came

home, he brought a new hit song with him. It ran: 'We are drinking up our grandma's little hut and the first and the second mortgage, too.' Well, mortgages of two thousand, three thousand marks you could drink up easily. I could not help laughing about it, while Hilde cried and ran out of the room. Robert first looked puzzled, then he said to me, 'You know, Hilde is just how women ought to be. But it's madness to save, nowadays.' Saving is the very source of wealth and health of a sound nation. But, we were no longer a sound nation. We were on our way to become a crazy, a neurotic, a mad nation.

"I was supposed to stay with Hilde and Robert for six weeks. Yet, when, after barely three weeks, a wire came from Father saying, 'Come home immediately, Mother extremely ill,' my worries about Mother were combined with relief that I could finally leave the world of a Junker's estate.

"I came home, and rang the bell very cautiously in order not to disturb my sick mother. Mother opens the door! So she was not visibly ill. Her first words were 'I know of your father's cable. It really wasn't necessary to come home just for that.'

"What was wrong with Mother? We sat at the coffee table and at first she did not want to tell me what was the matter. Then I said, 'You might just as well tell me everything now. It is no use trying to hide it.'

"The matter was that she had received—in paper marks—the last of her inheritance from her mother, the part that had been left in England before the war, in good old money. She said, 'Father wants me to have my feet operated on.' She had, during the war, the same thing that I had—swollen joints, from malnutrition.

"I said, 'Oh, Mother, that would be wonderful.' Mother said, 'But I don't want to do it.' I said, 'Well, Mother, it's better you do it now. The cost of the operation is going up every day.' She said, 'I know that well enough. I asked the doctor yesterday, and the cost was fifteen thousand

marks.' Maybe next month it would be more than the twenty thousand paper marks she had got.

"When I insisted, she said, 'I want to save this money for you.' The same attitude as Hilde had—you can still save money! I saw there was no use arguing with Mother. I had to speak with my father.

"Then I had a new struggle with her, since now she said, 'I have to keep it for your dowry. Or do you think you will find a man who is willing to marry you without a dowry?'

"I said, 'I don't want to have any dowry. It is such a silly idea, it belongs to a past age—I do not want to be married for money!'

"Mother said, 'In that case you will never get married. You have only to look in the mirror. Compared with you, I am still beautiful today.'

"I kept silent, but later when I went into the garden, I was terribly hurt. I stood under the cherry tree, on which I had sat as a scarecrow for the birds during the war, and I remembered that I was the ugly one of the family. I thought for the first time in days of Wolfgang.

"Poor Wolfgang, who loved such an ugly being! And all of a sudden I laughed, I laughed! It came again to me that this twenty thousand paper marks was only eighty-five gold marks and the whole thing was comic.

"I laughed until I nearly cried. Then I went into the house and waited for Father to come. It was time for supper. I went to supper and I saw that not even the dishes were there for Father. I said, 'What is the matter with Father? Isn't he coming?' Mother made a stern face, but with an ugly expression at the same time, and she said, 'Your father won't come home until he has enjoyed himself enough.' Then I understood things I had not understood before.

"I gritted my teeth and didn't speak another word, because I was afraid if I said one word, Mother would begin to tell me about it.

"Father came home very late and I was already in bed.

Next morning he left very early. I had a little note from him saying that he wanted me to be at the fish market at ten o'clock. Mother was still in her room so I only knocked at the door and said, 'I am going out. Father says he has fish for us.' I took my bicycle and went to the fish market.

"I want you for a moment to see the fish market. I had seen the fish, the people, and all the very picturesque and romantic life going on there. But now, having been a pupil of the Lichtwark School, I saw it with other eyes.

"It was after the hour of the main market; the bosses were gone, the employees were busy packing things away. I saw an old couple, buying some bones, and I saw the woman look at a bone on which a bit of meat was still hanging, not losing sight of it for a moment while it was wrapped. Such an intense and stern look I had never seen. I saw some children, with happy faces, putting a little money on the table and getting onions and a few potatoes. I saw three dirty boys buying some meat and putting a little money on the table and then running away and from a safe distance sticking their tongues out. And then I understood what was going on. I remembered Eddie's grudge against capitalists and capitalism. But I saw too that everyone was a prisoner of the system. The employee, being paid a salary which was by no means adjusted to the price increases, sold more than the reasonable amount of his bosses' goods. He didn't bargain much. You could see that he felt very benevolently toward those who were in greater need than he and from whom he extracted the deficit amount of his unadjusted salary.

"It was a sad world, a world in which none was better than the other; and all was a matter of chance and degree. A sad world, and a sad conception for a girl who still remembered the good old times of Grandmother! Our times made us cynical.

"I saw Father coming now from a distance. He held himself always so straight and although his hair was now very gray already, he had still an elastic, young way of walking. He had a sarcastic smile on his face and he said, 'Shall we

have a drink together?' Father usually proposed a drink together when there were difficult problems to discuss.

"My father took my bicycle along. We went into a bar and he ordered two drinks. The waitress brought them and Father wanted to toast her. His flirting with the waitress reminded me of other things. I said, 'Father, do you think it is right to leave Mother alone at home so much?' He said, 'Has Mother ordered you to ask that?' I said, 'No, I haven't spoken with Mother about it, but I think it my duty to speak with you about it. In former times Hilde would have done it.'

"Although I did not care for Mother I felt a solidarity with her as a woman. Life is easier for men than for women.

"Father said, 'I'll come home when Mother stops crying.' I said, 'Mother will not stop crying if you stay away. That's not the way. You know a solution has to be found. It can't go on so.'

"Does she want her operation?' he asked next. I said, 'No, I don't think she does.' Then he said, 'What did she say to you about it?' All my bitterness came again, and I told him that Mother said the money should be dowry for me. Father immediately saw the comic in this, and laughed. Then all of a sudden he was serious, and he said, 'You know, Mother is as a woman ought to be, only she is crazy!' After that I couldn't judge my father. In my opinion it was beyond any question of morals. I was sorry for Mother, but I couldn't judge him.

"On my way home I called up Wolfgang and made an appointment with him for the next day. Alas, I might have thought that love was an escape into a better world! But when I met Wolfgang, dressed in my best, he was rather unfriendly. He said, 'We can't go walking here in the park. Do you have money?' I said, 'Yes, I have.' He said, 'Well, is it enough to go to the City Hall?' I said, 'I have five hundred marks.' Wolfgang said, 'That will be enough.'

"Now I was shocked and a bit hurt. Did I love this boy who always had such perfectly pressed trousers? Yet I was

inconsistent, because from my point of view of equality, if the boy has money, he pays; if the girl has money, she pays. But at least he could have managed so that I would propose paying. Yet I want to show Wolfgang to you because this attitude of his toward women, although it was rather common in this type, made him a very easy prey for Nazism. I want to stress it, because such boys are the potential fascists.

"On our way to the City Hall, Wolfgang said, 'Well, you know we could see each other alone.' I said, 'Well, don't we see each other alone now?' He said, very crudely, 'Don't be silly, you know what I mean.' I knew what he meant, but I didn't want to know it. So I said, 'Well, what is your idea about being alone with me?' He said, 'I have a girl friend who would be willing to give us her apartment. She would then go out and we would have her apartment alone for us.'

"I knew, and I didn't want to know. I was curious, but my fear was greater still than my curiosity. I said, 'No, not yet.'

"He said very coolly, not in any way trying to understand or to help me, 'Well, as you wish.'

"We came to the City Hall and went into this tremendous room where here and there were couples as young as we. We found seats at a window, and Wolfgang ordered two drinks.

"We began a discussion of the play by Ibsen—*Peer Gynt*. I want to give a small piece of this discussion because it was rather typical for his type of mind. He said, 'You see this type, *Peer Gynt*. He was an adventurer. He was what I want to be. I am studying to be a doctor, but I don't do it to help people—that's silly. Maybe I had that idea as a boy, but now I think that I'll go as a doctor on a ship. I won't have much to do and I will earn big money.'

"I said, 'That is not your true idea. You are making that up, Wolfgang.' Said he, 'Ah, you, with your sentimental approach! We take what we can get. The world belongs to

the strongest. Moral scruples and sentiments are old-fashioned and ridiculous!"

"And where did he get that?" I asked.

"He didn't get it from the Lichtwark School, that much I know," Erna replied with energy. "It was in the air. Everyone tried to realize what joy he could, because tomorrow it would be gone. I said to Wolfgang, 'That sounds very modern, but it isn't. I have heard that before. Lotte and my Armenian friend, Lulu, used to say it, too. It came from Nietzsche, the superman, whose moral value was that he had no morals. Do you know what it reminds me of? The place I have just come back from—the Junker's estate. That Junker thinks that everything belongs to him, that everything is there only for his well-being and his luxury. It is the old feudal philosophy, the philosophy of Louis the Fourteenth—"I am the state." It belongs to the Middle Ages, and if you come with it now again in a time when we have the Lichtwark School, when we see that we can have a community of people who share everything—why, you are for me just nothing. It is all silly—old knight with rusty armor! And even if you pretend it is modern, if you oil the rusty things, it is still the old medieval way.'

"Wolfgang did not like what I said. 'I can't make you out. You are a queer girl,' he said. 'There is nothing queer about me,' I said. 'I am quite natural; sometimes I think I am the most natural person I see around me.'

"He was changed somehow. He was more restrained. And he suddenly said, 'It is time for me to go. I have to be home for lunch.'

"While going back through the city park, I said, 'Wolfgang, I want you to come to our home.' He had blue eyes, but now they were dark with amazement. 'You want to do that for me?' he asked. You know, he was just one who, somehow, in his heart, had a dream of love, too!

"Mother was at home, but somehow things had happened too quickly for me. Mother was not crying, she was very happy. She told me, 'I have just rented our big dining room and the salon to a retired officer of our navy.'



I was so amazed. I said, 'Well, I only hope that he doesn't have any resemblance to Uncle Eberhard.' Mother was upset by this remark and I saw that it was not the right time to mention about Wolfgang.

"Father came back in the evening, and Mother told him about having rented the rooms. I admired her for it, although the decision was not so hard as in former years. Times had changed so much that families of our kind were rather suspected of earning money in a wrong way if they had not rented rooms. Nearly every family was forced to rent rooms—very high, good families, for whom, in former times, the home was the holy place to which none but friends could come.

"Father said, 'Well, this officer! Did you ask for references?' Mother said, 'Why, Paul, how can you think of asking references from an officer of our former *kaiserliche* navy?' Father said, 'I can only tell you that on his pension he would never be able to pay the rent you have asked him.' Mother said with dignity, 'He was such a gentleman, he didn't even try to bargain.' But she called her friend from the German Far East Asia Club. Mrs. von Bülow was, naturally, of Mother's opinion, that you can't ask for references from a former naval officer.

"Next day, Father heard some rather frightening things about this former naval officer. He earned his money by smuggling liquor from ships arriving at the port. The customs tax on liquor was very high and he could make a lot of money. Mother, learning of this, was not in a mood in which I could tell her anything about Wolfgang.

"Next day the painters came. After an hour Mother came storming into my room, 'They are painting the walls red in his drawing room, violet walls in his sleeping room.' I said, 'If he is paying the rent, what business is it of ours what the color of his paint is?' 'A person who has a red drawing room and a violet sleeping room cannot be an honest person!' Mother said.

"But she had signed the contract and she couldn't get out of it. The next day this new tenant came. In the eve-

ning already he had a woman with him—not his wife. I need not explain to you how Mother was. Such things were going on in her house! He drank a lot, and was very loud in his rooms. He had a big party next evening, with men and women, and there was certainly not one married couple there. It went on very noisy and drunken, and next morning, before his door, stood all the bottles of wine, without the customs seals on any of them. Mother had the maid break the bottles in little pieces, because she was so afraid the police would find them in the garbage can, and maybe she would have the police in her house, too. For months she lived in fear the police would come and see those unsealed bottles.

“You can imagine that it was not a very good time for me to ask Mother to have Wolfgang come in! But when I couldn’t wait any longer, I spoke with Mother, and she refused. I was in such revolt that I decided to do what Wolfgang had asked me to do, to meet him at his girl friend’s apartment.

“It is strange how many different things are called love when you are young. This love had changed very much already, from a love of a dream boy to a dislike for my mother, and revenge against her. I had some kind of feeling for it, but my revolt was too great, and so I went.

“Nothing happened but a few kisses, but I was still from such an old generation that I was for some days quite worried lest I might have a bastard from the kisses! Wolfgang was mad at me when I refused to come to this friend’s apartment a second time, because I realized that my love had taken some queer forms and I wanted to find myself. Now not going to this girl friend’s apartment, not being allowed to see Wolfgang at home, where could we meet? Americans have solved this problem with the car. We had no car. We had only cafés and bars, for which we needed money. I had a monthly allowance now of five hundred marks. We had used that one morning in the City Hall, three hundred and fifty marks. Not wanting to ask my parents for a greater allowance, I decided to look

about for work to do. My old teacher at the girls' school helped me to find some pupils to whom I could give private lessons in the afternoons and I earned a bit of money so that I could go sometimes to a café, or even sometimes to a theater.

"Inflation, however, was going now at such a rate that one day one dollar was worth a thousand marks, next month two thousand marks, and next month four thousand marks.

"The end of the year came. I had set a price for my private lessons, which the mother of the pupil increased a bit only after bitter struggles, and not at all according to the increase in prices. By the end of the year my allowance and all the money I earned were not worth one cup of coffee. You could go to the baker in the morning and buy two rolls for twenty marks; but go there in the afternoon, and the same two rolls were twenty-five marks. The baker didn't know how it happened that the rolls were more expensive in the afternoon. His customers didn't know how it happened. It had somehow to do with the dollar, somehow to do with the stock exchange—and somehow, maybe, to do with the Jews. Anti-Semitism was growing tremendously. 'Stock exchange' and 'Jews' were very much connected in the minds of the people, and when the anti-Semitic propaganda said, 'It is the Jews,' people were ready to believe it. Looking around for the guilty ones, in a situation which nobody really understood, made those who lost their fortune, especially the middle class, ready prey for anti-Semitic propaganda.

"I gave up my private lessons, convinced that I could not earn money by honest means. Father began to speak against the Jews more and more.

"He used to say, 'There are two kinds of capital; one is creative capital, the other is parasitical. Creative capital is where a man works; parasitical capital is the capital on which a man gets interest. Creative capital is the capital we Germans have, parasitical capital is the capital of the Jews.'

"I thought this very silly and I said, 'Now, Father, where did you pick up that theory?' He said, 'I bought a pamphlet on the fish market.' It was a well-known pamphlet by Feder, one of the Nazis.

" 'Well,' I said to Father with utter contempt in my voice, 'since when do you pick up your ideas on the fish market?' Father replied, 'Since I have to work in the fish market to earn a living for you.'

"He spoke more and more at mealtimes about these things. Mother sometimes said something about Shakespeare and Shylock, and 'maybe there is something in it.' Then Father came with a new slogan—'We are the serfs of the Jews.' The more he repeated it the more I worried, because until now I had not heard the conception of Jews as parasites. So I decided to face Father. I said, 'Your theory is really silly—give me one proof of it.'

"Father said, 'I can give you the proof. Where did I get the money for my business—from the Jew Holzman!' 'Father,' I said, 'it was pure friendship, and you were so happy and so thankful about it.' He said, 'But now I have to pay interest to him on the gold value of the mark, while I lose money. If I have to pay him his interest at the beginning of next year, as I have to do, I will have nothing left.' 'But, Father,' I said, 'I remember that you said it was the usual way of business to make a gold clause in the contract.'

"Father was getting impatient. But I looked at it then in a different way,' he said. 'Now I work hard, get up at six o'clock in the morning and come home late and where does the money go? To the Jew!'

"I said, 'But Mother gave you capital, too, and don't you pay her interest?' Father said, 'That has nothing to do with the Holzmans.'

"I thought it was just the same but there was no arguing with him.

"Then I said to Mother, 'Mother, you know the Holzmans are in a very difficult situation. Mr. Holzman is going to lose his sight and Mrs. Holzman is the best friend

you ever had, the only one who stood by you when we had difficult times.'

"And then Mother said to Father, 'Well, Paul, I think in this case you have gone too far. Maybe there is something right in what you say about the Jews, but don't mention my friends Holzman in this connection any more.'

"I spoke with Wolfgang about it. I met him in a café. I still did not see Wolfgang the way he really was. I still saw him as one of the pupils of this Lichtwark School, and I thought that he was naturally as upset as I was. I said, 'Wolfgang, I am very, very worried about the anti-Semitism.' He said, 'Why are you worried?' I said, 'Because it is going on even in my family, and how can I look Heinz Schaefer in the eyes, who is one of the best friends I have? Besides, it is terribly silly.'

"Said Wolfgang, 'Well, why is it silly? For instance, Mother just recently told that the Jewish women wear silk stockings.' 'My own sister Lotte loves to wear silk stockings, and she is not a Jew,' I cried.

"Wolfgang said, 'There are so many "antis"—anti-left, anti-Jew, anti-right, anti-bolshevism, and anti-reactionary, so that this is only one "anti" of many "antis"!'

"I said, 'This is different, and I'll tell you why it is different. I can argue about political things, but here I cannot argue any more. You should have known my father as he used to be. The political education I had before I came to this school I got from him, and I learned so many things from him. He explained to me things against the Kaiser, and our parliament. But now he has stopped thinking and reasoning, and this will do more damage to us than it will ever damage the Jews.'

"I could say this with good conscience because at that time nobody could have foreseen the bloody anti-Semitism that was to come. It was still only a way of talking.

"Wolfgang said, 'I am sure it will get better. The little man must have something to cling to, you know, and anti-Semitism gives him a kind of superior feeling which he no longer has in any other way.'

"To end this I want to say that when the time to pay the interest came, Holzman made a very fair compromise with Father, before Father even mentioned it. Father acknowledged the fairness. Excluding the Holzmans, however, he went on with his anti-Semitic talk.

"We have now to come back to the most difficult national questions. In the beginning of 1923 came the Ruhr occupation. The formal reason given was that we had been short of some telegraph poles in our reparations payments. The Allies marched into the Ruhr in the midst of 'peace,' and united Germany, from the communists to the fascists, into one united front. The big Ruhr industrialists were imprisoned together with the workers. Some of the big-business men even made a big gesture and said, 'We want to be in the same jail with our workers, we do not want to have any special jail.'

"Our only weapon against the invasion of the Ruhr was peaceful resistance, striking. Yet all the slogans of the war came back. When I told you that in 1914, we spoke more in verses than in prose, now this was true again—our language became very poetic, and all the old patriotic songs were sung. That was seemingly a small thing, but it was symbolic.

"Great campaigns for money to help the Ruhr were going on. Even Father gave money. Our tenant had to give, too, since Mother insisted on it. Clothes were collected. The coal shortage began. We had cold houses again, but we were willing to suffer cold for our fatherland.

"At home, Mother was now really coming out. 'There—you see what happens if we don't have weapons—we have to have weapons again, we have to rearm, we have to be as strong as others or else we are at the mercy of our enemies, who want nothing else but to enslave us as soon as they can.' Father, who had not been interested in foreign policy for a long time, now went with my mother to a meeting of the Committee for Germans Abroad and came back very impressed, and said, 'Well, it would be good to have an army.'

"I was firm in my conviction that we should never have war again. I said, 'Don't you see that we have to find another means of defending our rights—the means of peaceful resistance?'

"My parents laughed. Mother said, 'Well, we take that means because we have no arms now.' Then I said, 'Let the enemies come in. Let us be so enduring in peaceful resistance that through our moral strength they are forced to go out.'

"It was maybe very silly, but I was convinced that I had the right position. My father was so enraged against me that he called me a traitor to the Fatherland because I had said that. Now I had the feeling I was a good German and loved my country very much, and being called a traitor to my fatherland was too much, and I sprang up and was ready to beat my father—nice pacifist I was! Then Mother intervened and said, 'Paul, really you have gone too far.' And as Mother intervened, Father said, 'Well, sit down immediately but I don't want to hear such things any more from you or else you won't get any monthly allowance from me any longer.' At once I said, 'I don't want to take any allowance from you if you are for rearmament.' So out went the allowance, because he stuck to it from then on.

"It sounds funny, and looking back to it, it is funny, because all means were inadequate to the situation. Yet we were so angry at each other that we did not realize what we were talking about. The abyss between reasoning and emotions had become greater than ever before; our emotions had slipped out of control as they had never done before.

"Still to be called a traitor of the Fatherland by one's own father is something one can't forget so easily either. I loved my country. I was as disgusted as Father was about the provocative action of the Allies. Yet I had been so proud that we reacted to it not with the means of force, but with passive resistance. Mother now made me realize that we did not act so out of conviction but out of the

lack of arms. The nationalistic propaganda was not at all war but rearmament, so that we would no longer be at the mercy of the enemy—the enemy would never have dared to march into the Ruhr if we were a strong nation.’ This I want to stress since it is one of those spheres of twilight which the militant nationalists created and used for their purpose. They did not say, ‘We want war’; what they did say was ‘We must be strong so no one dare attack us.’ They had gradually and step by step to prepare the minds of millions who were deeply and earnestly against war. Once the military people have arms at their disposal, the decision whether and when to start war is also at their disposal.

“With the Ruhr occupation, the mark went down even more. Father had tried to organize the fish market. Organize against whom? Against big business which asked for cash payment? That had once been his idea. But big business was much too strong. Father now ‘united the fish market’ to ‘stand up as one man’—against the small store keepers all over the country. No more credits were given to them—they would have to pay first and then get their fish.

“Anticapitalist feeling was strong everywhere, and in this fish market episode Father saw himself as a true socialist, one who ‘acted instead of talking.’ What he had done was merely to return to the medieval guild system, when each guild made protective laws for itself and against everybody else. But Father benefited, at least, and for the first time since he had become ‘a free and independent’ man, he could go for a vacation. He took Mother along, and I was left at home—with millions of marks at my disposal, and permission to go to the movies if I wanted to!

“Actually, I didn’t want to take Father’s money even to go to a movie. We were growing more and more out of sympathy by that time. So I got money by another means. I sold some stamps he had once given me. From one set especially I made a lot—the stamps of our lost colonies. I took Wolfgang to the theater and had a wonderful eve-



ning—there were still times when we thought ourselves in love—and with what was left of the money I bought a pair of shoes, which I badly needed. But it was wrong of me, for although the stamps were a gift, certainly Father would not have thought me free to sell them. I suppose my callousness about this was just part of the general moral decay.

“When Father came back from vacation, he saw that the workers had discovered the ‘trick of inflation,’ which was to figure the value of money in gold. Time and again the workers struck for the ‘adjustment of their wages.’ After their strikes, their wages had been adjusted—to the actual price increases. But the price increases went on and so the workers had to strike again for new adjustments. What they asked for now was wages paid daily in exact accordance with the daily mark devaluation. Strikes followed strikes; the port, the workers’ districts were seething with unrest. The closer the workers came to their goal, the quicker the mark raced down. June, 1923: one dollar equaled a hundred thousand marks; July, 1923: one dollar equaled two million marks; August, 1923: one dollar equaled one hundred million. What a time! What a race!

“The printing presses of the government could no longer keep pace. They were still printing ten-thousand-mark bills when one dollar had gone into the millions of marks. You could see mail carriers on the streets with sacks on their backs or pushing baby carriages before them, loaded with paper money that would be devaluated the next day. Life was madness, nightmare, desperation, chaos.

“The government struggled hard to restore the gold standard. But—the Minister of Finance was the socialist Hilferding! Big business was ready, now, to restore the gold standard; but the whole reactionary clique, including the ‘Green Front’ of agriculture, peasants, and Junkers, wanted to be given the credit for restoring sound and solid money. So they made an offer and a threat: either Hilferding must resign and one of their men take over the Minis-

try of Finance, or else they would not stop inflation. 'We'll see who can hold out longer—you or we,' they said.

"While this struggle went on, chaos increased. The Middle Ages came back. Communities printed their own money, based on goods, on a certain amount of potatoes, of rye, for instance. Shoe factories paid their workers in bonds for shoes which they could exchange at the bakery for bread or the meat market for meat.

"At this stage, the Communists believed that their time had come. They attempted an uprising. It began in Saxony, on October twenty-third. It was plain the very next day that it could not succeed, for the people had only one longing, for order, and only one dread, of further chaos. The Communist party sent couriers into all parts of Germany to call off the uprising which they had planned to spread all over the Reich. For some reason, however, the courier to Hamburg arrived too late, and so we in Hamburg had a Communist uprising.

"We did not notice it until the morning, when the streetcars stopped running. But we had our bicycles, and so Father rode to business and I rode to school. School was closed, and I rode right back home through streets which were crowded with people walking to work in silence, sometimes stopping, as if undecided whether to go on or to return home. I was almost disappointed. I had had a very different idea of strikes and disorders—with a great deal of noise and speeches at every street corner. But there was nothing like that to be seen.

"Mother sat frightened in the apartment. She had heard from the maid that there had been disorders in the city; she had tried to telephone, but the telephone employees were on strike, too. 'Why did Father have to go to the office?' she moaned; and when I assured her that everything was quiet in the streets, she angrily said, 'That does not mean a thing!'

"It was not until our boarder came home in the afternoon that we learned more. He told us that Reichswehr

troops were on their way and everything would be all right soon, except possibly in the unruly harbor district.

"But the telephone did not function on the following day, and Mother had run out of money! I asked the grocer at our corner for credit, but in vain. 'I ask you,' he said indignantly, 'who will give credit nowadays?' And what could I say, knowing that my own father was not extending credit any more? 'All right,' I said to Mother when I was back from the grocery, 'I'll simply go to Father and get some money.'

" 'I will not permit you to go into the harbor district,' Mother said. 'You might borrow some money from the boarder,' I suggested. Mother, however, did not want our boarder to know that Father had not come home. Our supplies touched bottom. The maid was already looking sideways at us, and Mother hardly dared to leave her bedroom. I no longer asked questions but set out for the harbor. I preferred walking, for you could not tell what would happen to you on the way. 'If anything happens to me,' I reflected, 'it isn't so bad, but if something happens to the bicycle I'll really catch it from Mother.'

"The farther I got from our quiet region, the more police patrols I saw. The closer I came to the Reeperbahn, the fewer police were to be seen and the more Reichswehr soldiers. They were young, well-fed lads, solidly built, with broad shoulders and heavy bones. Somehow I did not like them. Suddenly I had an uncanny feeling.

"But I continued until I came to a spot where all roads were blocked off with barbed wire, and a resounding '*Halt! Weitergehen verboten!*' put a temporary end to my march. Two soldiers were standing in front of me, hands on their guns, steel helmets firmly buckled beneath their chins. I tried to say calmly: 'I have to get to the fish market. Could you tell me, please, which road I can take?' 'It is prohibited,' one of the soldiers shouted. 'But I have to get there,' I repeated, angry by then. The second soldier looked me over and asked in a loutish voice: 'What do you want there anyway?'

"I should have liked to ask what business this was of his. But there was something that cautioned me. It was not the hand on the gun, the steel helmet. It was the faces of these two soldiers—these coarsely molded peasant faces which vaguely reminded me of the tenant farmers on Hilde's estate and of all their hatred, accumulated for generations. Don't tease the animal, I thought—appeal to its human reason! And so I spoke. I told him that I wanted to reach my father to get money, because my mother and I were at home without money, and that my father had his business in Altona. 'Anyone could say that,' the soldier said derisively.

"I said, 'You can check what I say. Go to the next restaurant and look in the telephone book. I'll give you the name and address, and you can make sure that I've told you the truth.'

"This last word had a completely unexpected effect on the two soldiers. Their faces darkened with abysmal distrust. They had relaxed a bit, but now they snapped back to a rigid posture and one of them said, threateningly, 'See that you get away from here, or we'll arrest you!'

"That was too much for me. Arrest me, just because I had told the truth! Arrest me, in my own country! I felt such rage at these young fellows who wanted to block my way and believed that they could threaten me, simply because they were wearing uniforms and carrying guns in their holsters. I said: 'I thought you were here to see that people could live in peace and order! But I do not find it in order if I can't go to my father.'

"The first soldier thereupon took one slow step, raised his heavy boot, and slowly put it down again, moving closer to me. I gave way. The two, as at an invisible command, tightened the straps of their steel helmets beneath their chins. I made a hundred-and-eighty-degree turn and started on my way back. I felt like crying with rage at my retreat.

"I had walked quite a stretch back on the almost de-

served Reeperbahn, when a voice called, 'Hey, miss, don't run like that. Wait a moment.'

"I turned and saw two men in workmen's clothes. I waited. Running away was senseless on this perfectly straight street, and besides, I did not mean to run like a coward for the second time.

"The two came up to me. I saw, with a secret sigh of relief, that at least they were older men, and they had the gaunt, long-drawn faces of the genuine Hamburgers. 'Don't just run away, now,' said one of them. And the other said, 'We heard the whole thing. Do you still want to get to your father?' 'How do you know that?' I said suspiciously. 'If you wish, we can take you to your father,' said one of the two. 'They have their guns, but we have our wits with us. This is where we're at home, and we know our neighborhood better than those fellows. Do you want to come?'

"I promptly had confidence in these two men. It felt so good to see people in civilian clothes—faces that were alive and obviously pleased to know the district better than the military. First, the two took me off the straight street into a side street and then through a maze of narrow, crooked alleys, through houses, in by the front door and out by the back door. They had me tell them my story once again and they listened with a great deal of understanding. I put many questions; they tried very hard to answer in High German, because unfortunately I did not understand Hamburg *Platt*. In the end, I gave free rein to my entire indignation. 'And those,' I said of the soldiers, 'those are sent against people like you! Why, they're green boys—how can they be sent against grown men? You could be their fathers.'

"This evoked energetic protests. 'Our boys are not like that,' they said. And then they explained to me that the formations sent to Hamburg were made up chiefly of peasant boys from Pomerania and East Prussia. 'Our police aren't so bad,' said one of the two, and added, 'These peasant boys are the only ones you can still bring to shoot at

their own countrymen.' Both of them assured me that they were not Communists and had taken no part in the whole business; but when these Reichswehr lads had moved in, they had gone on strike, too. 'We wouldn't believe it from the Communists,' they said, 'but now we see with our own eyes that our republic is arming these fellows and leaving us without arms. That's why we went on strike.'

"I understood completely, and regretted that I could not go on strike. 'All right,' said the two, when they had brought me safely to the vicinity of the fish market. 'Now you can go on alone. If you want, we'll wait till you come back—but you mustn't give us away.'

"I thought it over. Perhaps Father would come back with me, but perhaps he was not even in his office. I assured the two men that I'd be terribly grateful if they would wait for me, and in case I should come with my Father they were not to be frightened, please, because he would not give them away, either. They posted themselves in a gateway, and I continued on my way.

"Father was in his office. With him was his partner, Mr. von Bergmoos. As I entered, the two were leaning far back in their office chairs; between them was a large desk, on which each of them had his feet. The room was full of tobacco smoke, and both had liquor bottles and glasses in front of them.

"I had had a premonition! I slammed the door behind me, with a loud bang. Father and his partner both jerked upright and stared at me as at a ghost, while their feet dropped off the desk. For a fleeting moment I thought: 'God knows, I seem to be the only one who'll run in this neighborhood today, all alone. All the rest are in pairs.' And then Father thickly told his partner: 'M-my d-daughter, that's the girl!' After which, both stared at me again out of glassy eyes.

'Father,' I said severely and out of caution remained standing at the door, 'why don't you come home?'

"Father made a great effort to seat himself decently in his chair. 'Come here, my girl,' he brought forth without

stuttering. I went to him. 'Sit on my knee,' said Father. I sat down on the desk instead, opposite him. Bergmoos poured a glass of schnapps for me and offered me a cigarette. I had experienced so much on this day that my brain was working at an unaccustomed pace, able to think faster and more clearly than I should ever have considered possible. It was thinking independently, as it were, and at this instant it was merely thinking: 'Gain time, so as to get out of this new trap not only with a whole skin but with money.'

"I accepted the liquor and the cigarette with thanks. Father moved his chair closer to me and stroked my arm, while his partner was looking me over. I handed Father his half-filled glass, and thus at least managed to make his hand move away from me and toward the glass. I got on my feet again and asked once more, energetically: 'Why didn't you come home?'

"Father emptied his glass, put it firmly on the table, and declared: 'Whether or not I come home is nobody else's business.'

" 'It is our business, too,' I contradicted him, 'because we haven't any money and the grocer won't lend us anything and Mother has nothing to eat any more.'

"This explanation seemed to sober him a little. 'I see,' he said in a far clearer voice. 'So Mother hasn't any more money. Then I suppose she's bawling her eyes out!'

" 'No wonder, on an empty stomach,' I dryly replied.

"Father scratched behind his ears, meditating. 'How did you get here, anyway?' he asked. 'I thought the Hamburg border was closed.'

" 'If you want to, you can get through,' I boldly claimed, but added truthfully that two workers had helped me by leading me on detours past all sorts of road blocks.

" 'What,' cried Mr. von Bergmoos, 'you've gone with workers? You've let that scum help you?' And he smashed the table with his fist. Unfortunately this did not have the expected imposing effect, since the fist did not fully obey his will but dropped off the table, hit the chair, and

caused its possessor to utter a somewhat plaintive 'Ow—!' I asked him not to interfere for a moment, as I had to talk to my father.

"Father, with a mumbling tongue, told his partner: 'What about her going with workers? My daughter's right. My daughter's always right. Do you want her to go with us, perhaps? We're coming to an end, anyway.' And, turning to me, he mumbled on: 'My child, remember that your father told you this: There are only two ways left—go with the workers or go with the Reichswehr. With us, you can only go to the dogs.'

"Eventually I got Father to give me money. To make him come home, though, was beyond my strength. He kept repeating, 'I'm not coming until your mother is through bawling.' And how was I to promise him that Mother would not 'bawl' if she saw him in this condition?

"My workers were still standing in the same gateway, waiting for me. They led me away safe and sound with my money. I did not tell them how I had found my father, but I did tell them what he had said to me. The two shook their heads, and one of them said: 'They'd really rather be ruined than come to us.'

"Well, the uprising in Hamburg was over in a few days, and all over the country the leaders of the Communist party were arrested. Yet, at the coming election, in the spring of 1924, the Communist party increased from half a million votes to three and a half million votes. But I will tell you of the Communists later, when I tell you of the depression and the fateful division within the working class. At the end of inflation, I did not know much about the Communists. It was sometimes whispered at our school that two of our teachers were siding with them but at home we considered Communists dangerous criminals and knowing none, I had the idea that they must look quite different from any other human being, somehow wild and furious. Why, they wanted civil war! No, I didn't want to have anything to do with war, be it international or civil war.



"Shortly after this uprising in Hamburg Hilferding had to resign. The new Finance Minister was Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, who later became Hitler's finance expert, providing him with the financial means for rearmament and war. But at that time, when the 'honor' of restoring a sound and solid mark was given to him, he called himself a democrat!

"While the gold standard was being restored, we had another uprising, this time in Munich, where Hitler and his gang 'putsched.' Munich was far away from Hamburg. The Putsch made headlines in the newspapers for a few days, then it was all over. It was called the 'Beer Cellar Putsch,' because Hitler had his 'headquarters' in a beer cellar. He marched with his followers through the streets of Munich, Ludendorff at his side—our General Ludendorff who had so cowardly fled Germany in the days of the defeat! When the shooting began, Hitler was the first to run away.

"Mother, reading the headlines about the Putsch, said, 'That can only happen in Bavaria where the Catholics are.' We of the Lichtwark School laughed at the 'beer cellar hero.' He and many of his leaders were soon jailed and we thought all would be over. I should have known better because I heard Father say of Hitler and his gang, 'They are the young generation, the front soldiers generation, and we will hear more of them. They are still young and act foolishly, but they will grow up. If they will only drop Ludendorff and his kind, maybe some day I'll even give them a chance.'

"You see how the minds of the middle-class people were prepared during inflation? Father was not an exception. At the spring elections in 1924 when the National Socialist party put up its own candidates for the first time it got two million votes!

"So little is known here in America of this preparation of the minds of the people for fascism, during inflation, that I have told you as much about it as I can. Inflation is the source of fascism, and not only in Germany. And the

preparation of the minds is the beginning. Let us not forget the French saying, 'It is the first step that counts.'

"Before I tell you, however, of the 'happy time of solid money and prosperity' that lay before us, let us once more look back at the battlefield of inflation and the Republic. For a battle it was, this inflation, fought out with financial means. The cities were still there, the houses not yet bombed and in ruins, but the victims were millions of people. They had lost their fortunes, their savings; they were dazed and inflation-shocked and did not understand how it had happened to them and who the foe was who had defeated them. Yet they had lost their self-assurance, their feeling that they themselves could be the masters of their own lives if only they worked hard enough; and lost, too, were the old values of morals, of ethics, of decency. Would prosperity last long enough to restore them?

"And we may ask one question more: Why did Hitler not yet win at that time? He had won a foothold in the cities but not yet in the country. The 'paradise of inflation,' the 'Green Front,' was not yet ready to join him. They had paid off their mortgages, they did not care about the cities' quarrels; they wanted law, order, and high prices. And big business, too, was not yet ready to support Hitler. Their new, modern machines were just pouring out ever more consumer goods. The market was there for them; the market with good solid marks in the hands of a population which had for a decade bought only the most urgent necessities of life. They wanted law, order, and customers, but no new experiments. And, last if not least, the Reichswehr was not yet ready to side with Hitler. Ludendorff had marched at Hitler's side; yet Ludendorff was not a member of the new Reichswehr. The military caste has its own 'code of honor' and a member of the General Staff who ran away in the hours of defeat, as Ludendorff had, was an outcaste; yet, by blood, stock, and tradition he belonged to them. They could cast him out, yet they would never permit the Republic to jail one of

their own kind. Do you recognize Uncle Eberhard, who tore off his epaulets himself rather than have them torn off by the plebs? Basically, it is the same pattern, the pattern of the professional militarists.

"The Republic came out of inflation plucked and weakened; yet on the whole it stood its ground, and thus it halted the rising wave of reactionary and fascist movements in Europe. The first reactionary victories were in the Balkans, where the old feudal clique with its 'white terror' once again defeated the people who had begun their fight for freedom, equality, and peace. Then came the victory of fascism in Italy. Germany, through its geographical situation and its industrial potential, is the heart of Europe, and with the defeat of the Nazis the fascist movements all over Europe came to a halt—for the time being.

"And to think that all the while the United States lived through its time of happy isolation and boom, with but a short decline in 1920! How long will it be until the world is really one world, until every people in every corner of this world realizes that what happens elsewhere will, sooner or later, have its repercussions for them, too?

"Well, to come back to my story. With good, stable money back again, we began to settle down, to make our plans, to start life once more. I had my plan, too. I wanted to go to the university. My parents made me a proposal. I would be allowed to study if I stayed home and would go to the University of Hamburg. I decided to go away. It was not only the revolt of a young girl who wanted to go away from home—it was more. I was afraid that some day or another I would give in to my parents! Being dependent and living at home, I feared that some day I could not stand the daily struggle and would give in. I knew from experience if I gave my little finger, they would immediately want the whole hand. So I decided to go away at any cost.

"Lotte came at Christmas to visit us. She tried to get some kind of certificate from her dancing teacher so that

she could give lessons. She wanted to earn money now that our money was worth earning again. She was not happy with Juergen, but she thought that if she could win some degree of independence they would still be all right for they had already a son. We had one evening together, and she said, 'You don't know what it means to earn your own living. I give you my advice—stay at home.'

"Mother, characteristically, only saw in my decision to go away a desire to be free in a sexual way. She was unable to see any other meaning of freedom for women than sexual freedom. To warn me, she took me to a movie of which we had heard. It was the well-known story of a girl who leaves her parents and runs away with a man who does not marry her. She has a child, the man leaves her, and she goes down and down, until at the end she dies, as a prostitute in a hospital. And the good, moral people are glad about the end, for it is a good warning for their daughters.

"On the way home Mother said, 'You see what will happen to you if you leave us.' I said, 'But, Mother, times have changed! We have now other means to earn our living, other things than prostitution are open to us. We do not have to marry just any man. I don't say that I don't want to marry some day, and I want to have children too, but first I want to learn more.'

"She was unable to understand. 'You can learn and stay at home,' she said. She really thought that she had always given her children every freedom they wanted. Hadn't she allowed me to go to school? She would allow me now to go to the university.

"I said, 'But, Mother, every month you present another man to me and say, "Wouldn't he be a good husband for you?"' This she did even the last month before I left!

"Father had quite a different attitude. He said, 'You may do what you want. I have lost everything. It will be difficult for me even to care for Mother and me. We old people, we cannot care for the younger ones. You have to stand on your own feet. The older generation cannot help

you as it would have in former times. We don't expect anything from the younger generation, except to leave us alone!

"The only thing I felt my heart cling to was my school. That had really become the home of my whole spiritual and emotional being. Here my ideals were realized, or at least on their way to realization.

"Well, during inflation Wolfgang and I had decided to go away together. Now inflation was over. We hadn't spoken about it for many, many months. I had long taken it for granted. On one of the last days of school, I left with Wolfgang and said, 'To think that we'll be soon together in a new town!' Wolfgang said, 'What do you expect from a new town?' I looked at him amazed, and said, 'Well, weren't we ready to go away from Hamburg?' Wolfgang said, 'Do you really think that there is any spot in Germany where things are different?' I said, 'Don't you want to go away any more?' He said, 'I want to, but only if I have means enough to live as I want to live. I don't know how I can get the means.' I said, 'But, Wolfgang, we can earn our living while going through the university.'

"Wolfgang only laughed. 'I want to be a doctor. I have to study hard, and I want to meet the right people so that after I am through with my study I shall be in circles which can help me along. Do you really think that without money and earning my living I could ever meet the right people?'

"I did not argue with him. Somehow, I did not know, myself, whether I wanted him to come with me or not. I only asked, 'Do you mean to tell me that you won't leave Hamburg?' Wolfgang replied, 'I have not yet made up my mind.'

"I still loved him. He had been my first love, the only one up to now who had ever kissed me, and out of all my reading I had believed that the man who kisses you first is the man to whom you belong. So I felt that I somehow belonged to him. On the other hand, I slowly began to see him as he really was, and I could not reconcile it with his

being a pupil at the Lichtwark School. Hadn't we had the same education? Hadn't we been educated in the same ideas? How could it possibly happen that this boy had developed so differently from all the ideas of our school? Once our class had discussed with Haffner the 'efficiency of education.' Most of the pupils had been rather optimistic. Lydia Kassel had even said, 'All we need is Lichtwark Schools all over Germany.' Haffner had smiled somewhat indulgently and had remarked, 'Education is efficient only if and when the conditions of life correspond to the ideas we teach. Education is important, but you can't make even the best ideas stick as long as life contradicts them daily, hourly.'

And then there was something else. I was a girl, and to me the school had given more than it had given to Wolfgang. To me it had given equality of girls and boys, which for Wolfgang was not an achievement. Indeed, Wolfgang had slowly begun to hate girls who wanted to study. He excepted me, somehow, but he had had a rather bad experience with another girl.

"We had had a new pupil in the last year, a pupil who came from a wealthy family, the only child of a divorced mother, and she had been very spoiled. She had fallen in love with Wolfgang. Out of this love she had said, 'I want to study medicine, too.' Now Wolfgang really wanted to study medicine and he, a boy, could not. This girl didn't really want to and she, a girl, could. He hated her for this, and when he turned away from her she tried to kill herself. I spoke of this girl and he said, 'Don't speak to me about her, or I'll take a whip and beat her!'

"You know, the competition of the sexes is not such a problem as long as there are opportunities and jobs for all. But in poor countries and in times of depression it is a problem. I think you too will have it here when the next crisis comes. Full employment is the precondition for fair employment of all, no matter whether they are different in sex, color, or creed.

"I think I began to see Wolfgang as he was really when

we discussed this girl who tried to kill herself. He spoke so coldly about it. I said, 'It is terrible. If such things had happened in former times we would have been shaken to our bones, and we would have had deep pity, and now we only say, What does it matter? Why shouldn't she commit suicide? What is going to become of us?' He simply answered, 'Beasts.' Yes, we had lost pity. We had seen and heard of too many suicides, of too much misery and desperation. But this loss of the power to pity is one of the most dreadful things that can happen to an individual or to a people."

Erna shook back her hair. I saw a look of tragic memory on her face. She went on, "To lose pity—it is the result of too much misery—you get accustomed, used to too much suffering! You see the reaction now to the starving peoples all over the world! Here in this country you see the reaction to the atom bomb. You are without pity already in this country. Compare how you people behaved with the reaction at the time of the earthquake in Japan—you see how utterly you have changed!"

"You are right," I said quietly.

"It affects now, really, the whole world," she said. "But I think, when Wolfgang just said 'Beasts,' I was already frightened. In him the process of becoming without pity was finished. He considered me as still too decadent because I had yet some pity, or some longing to get it back. But Wolfgang was even younger than I was, so he had been shaped more than I by war and inflation and the old values had not had time to get integrated into him.

"Well, I got my first job even before I left Hamburg and I got it through Mother Holzman. We still saw the family, not so much as in my childhood but sometimes. They were invited to our house, but Father and Mother now took care that they were invited when we had no other guests. I went to their house more than I would have gone otherwise, out of some sort of opposition against my parents.

"Mother Holzman gave me a job. The fashion at that

time was for knitted table covers. She ordered two rather big table covers, for which I was to get thirty marks apiece. Thirty marks was a lot of money—good marks, solid marks, sound marks you could make your plans with. This was the first real money I had earned, and I was extremely proud. The job was very difficult, as the covers were made from purple material and it was hard on the eyes. But I knitted and knitted and knitted in my desire to earn this beautiful new money.

"The last evening at home my parents gave a farewell dinner for me and that meant very good things to eat. Father even had a bottle of wine on the table, and when we were finished with the dinner he made a speech. He said to me, 'You have chosen your own way, which is not our way. If you fail, do not complain. You can only come back to us if and when you are ready to share our opinions, to make friends with our friends. If you cannot do this, then you should not be surprised to find our doors closed to you. If some day, moreover, we face each other as enemies on different sides of the barricades, maybe I will then still respect you for your convictions, but I will have no mercy on you. I will fight you as I would fight an enemy, for there are now issues which are more important than our own flesh and blood.' "

I heard this in horror. "Why did he say that?" I exclaimed.

"He was already for Hitler," Erna answered gravely. "And he knew I was against Hitler. One day he had said that he might give Hitler a chance. I had said, 'Then I would be ashamed that you are my father.' "

"But it couldn't have come about suddenly, such a speech! You must have argued with him many times," I exclaimed again.

"Yes," Erna said simply. "But you must see the picture of Germany then. There were murders going on, there were people being killed, here some, there some, all the time."



"Did you know who killed them?" I asked.

"We seldom knew the guilty persons. All we knew was that the Free Corps were now in the National Socialist party and that they were for a war of revenge and that they were against the Republic."

"What sort of people were killed?"

"The Democrats, the leftist people, the people of the Republic. There were constantly emotional outbreaks which the government could not wholly control. It was not a real civil war, but they were killing people. I have given you an idea of the Free Corps, how they beat the farm hands, how they came to the city in the Kapp Putsch, how they killed Rathenau, and how before Rathenau they killed Erzberger, a Catholic minister of the Republic. There was constantly some killing going on. We had got used to speaking of fighting and of killing. It was no longer sensational, no longer headlines, it had become daily life. So I was not shocked when Father said that.

"And do not forget that he really saw in me a traitor to the Fatherland. This was even more serious for him, at that time, than my disgust of Hitler. It may be difficult for Americans to understand our sharp division in national questions. But think how it is already here, in America, if you want to understand how it was in Germany. Here it begins already, although there is still a real difference in degree. Those here who are against an army are already considered un-American. Those who do not want the atom bomb secret kept are un-American. And still you are the biggest power.

"Think of these things in Germany, which was surrounded by enemies who were ready at every instant to march in, as they had in the Ruhr occupation, and then you can see how those who wanted peace more than a strong nation would be called traitors by the hundred-percent Americans. Maybe from this you can understand."

I brought her back to her own story. "What was your feeling as you sat at your home table and heard your father make this speech?"

“The old good form still was there,” she said, smiling sadly. “Father stood up, I stood up, we had our wineglasses in hand, and we toasted each other. But I knew that for me there would be no return. There was no more room for tolerance.”

## VII

IT WAS not easy to recover from inflation and get adjusted to 'normal times.' For months we still waited for a new catastrophe to throw us off again somehow. It took time to expect the next day to be just as normal and quiet as the present day.

"I left home and went to the University of Freiburg, in southern Germany. I might as well tell you about our universities and the people I met there. Our universities were the stronghold of the reactionaries—besides the military caste—ever since the liberal bourgeoisie had been defeated in the 1848 revolution; ever since our bourgeoisie had compromised with feudalism in order to build a common front against the workers and the liberal and progressive forces within the bourgeoisie. For generations the reactionaries had monopolized the universities. Now, in our republic, this monopoly was, if not yet broken, at least dented.

"Few workers had a chance to study. Thus the universities were the battlefield between the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie and the forces of the reactionaries. During the years of my study this battlefield was in a state of truce. The two fronts did not 'fraternize,' yet they did not beat each other either.

"I had chosen Freiburg simply because it was so far away from Hamburg. And I was happy there. You know, our universities are not like your colleges. We do not live there. The institution of campus is unknown in Germany. So I rented a little attic room. It was so small, there was a bed and a stove directly beside the bed, and a table and a

chair and a chest of drawers with a washbasin on it, and a closet for my dresses; and then there was hardly any room left to squeeze myself in. But what did that matter? For me, this room was freedom. And when I looked out of the small window I saw the beautiful forests of the Black Mountains. I dreamed—yes, I began to start my old dreams again—and I even wrote a few poems. So you see how happy I was.

"I waited eagerly for the university to open. You see, I went to study in order to learn how to live. It may sound silly, but I read once that Lessing, the German poet, went to the university with the same intentions. I wanted to study literature, history, and philosophy, and I was especially eager to listen to lessons in ethics. True, I was disillusioned about ethics. It had nothing to do with our time and our problems. It had nothing to do with any time at all. It was just abstract—as if ethics, too, weren't closely connected and created out of the problems and antagonisms of its times!

"I must tell you that Wolfgang came to Freiburg, too. I don't know how he got the money, but he came. One day we went out for lunch together. At a table opposite us sat a group of students who belonged to a students' corps. I do not know whether I should call them fraternities—corps would be better, I think, because corps—officer corps, free corps, students' corps—they all belonged together. These students were the sons of rich people. They were the 'right people' whom Wolfgang wanted to meet. They had their exclusive clubhouses; their 'code of honor'; even money and good family were not enough; the student who wanted to become a member had to prove that he was worthy of the honor. That is, he must be able to drink unlimited quantities of alcohol, he must be able to go to a brothel without being ashamed of it, and he must prove his manly courage and strength in duels. Oh, they had fine parties, too, and daughters of good families were invited. Because of my name I got several invitations from them at the beginning but I tore them up and burned them im-

mediately. These invitations stopped after that day I lunched with Wolfgang. You see, it seemed to me as I looked at those students sitting next to us that they were relics of the Middle Ages. They wore jackets and funny caps in the colors of their corps. I hated them—they were arrogant and powerful; they were of the old ruling class, the old reactionary group. On the table before me were round pieces of cardboard which were used under the beer glasses. I put one on my head like a cap just to ridicule those silly student caps. Nothing happened—at least nothing that I observed at that moment. But three days later Wolfgang came up to my room, which he very seldom did, and his head was bandaged. I said, 'My goodness, what has happened to you?' Wolfgang said proudly, 'I have had my first duel.' I said, 'You had a duel? How dare you come into my room when you did such a thing?' Wolfgang said, 'I did it for you.' 'For me!' He said, 'Yes! I was challenged because you put the beer saucer on your head!'

"Well, I forgot my pacifism and I beat him with my hands on both sides of his bandaged head and shouted, 'Out of my room immediately, and I never want to see you again!' He went out. We saw each other still from time to time after that, but actually it was the end. Had they challenged me, I would have given them the slaps. But for their corps women were a lower class. It was the one thing for which they stood. It was beneath their dignity to challenge women—as it was to challenge Jews!

"I had found work in the students' organization as a secretary. One day I sat there typing and one of these corpsmen came in. Seeing a new girl at the typewriter, he asked me, 'What are you doing here?' I said, 'I am the new secretary.' He said, 'Well, I didn't hire you.' I said, 'No, Mr. So-and-So hired me.' 'I'll speak with him.' Then I said, 'I think the least you can do is to tell your name.' He looked at me somewhat disconcerted, and told his name. Then, for the first time, really, I told him my name, with the emphasis on the 'von.' You should have seen the change in his face! 'I am sorry—I didn't mean to be so

rough, please forgive me,' he stammered and he hurried out of the room. You see, the universities before the war were the possession of the ruling class, and the students regarded themselves as the master race. We Germans don't see the Germans as the master race; we see this group as the ones among our own people who govern the Germans."

"That is a distinction that we Americans don't get," I put in. "We think of the Germans as all of a piece. We don't realize that there was this element in German life that was struggling against the very same thing that we struggled against when we fought the Germans."

"That is why I want to abolish the direct article 'the' Germans," Erna said with vigor. "I want to abolish 'the' for the Germans and for every people in the world. I think I would do even the Americans wrong if I would say 'the' Americans. People are divided within a nation, and the national division is obsolete. History doesn't always abolish the obsolete things at the right time, and that makes for so much struggle. I know of no better example than our university to make you see the German 'master race' and the people of Germany—who looked upon them as the 'master race' who oppressed our people.

"Now to go on with my story. Wolfgang wanted to belong to such a corps or fraternity, of course, and later he did.

"I learned to know other students who did not belong to fraternities. There was a poor man's son who was constantly without a penny; but he wrote beautiful poems. He just began to become known when Hitler came to power. He bought a tiny little farm and decided to grow potatoes until the day Hitler was driven out and he swore that he wouldn't publish a single poem in the Nazi newspapers. I haven't heard from him since then but my guess is that he stuck to his oath. And there was Hans Arno Joachim, a Jew and the son of a Freiburg doctor. He 'strictly refused to concern himself with politics.' He had just written a biography of a German writer when Hitler came to power. He escaped into France and wrote some

fine anti-Nazi plays for the Strasbourg radio station 'Freedom.' He went underground when France was occupied. But the Gestapo found him and killed him.

"Through my work at the students' organization I learned to know another student who built up a sports organization for those students who did not belong to fraternities and had no clubhouse or training ground. They would never have studied in former times. But now we had a republic which gave equality, and our young people were not willing to leave the privilege of higher education over to those who were born into all kinds of privileges. Well, this young man studied literature and was at the same time a sports teacher. His father had once a small leather factory which had gone into bankruptcy during inflation. During vacation, this young man worked in the mines in the Ruhr to earn money. Thus he had learned to know workers. He belonged to the so-called 'progressive left wing' of the Catholics.

"I discovered that I had within me despite all my ideas about equality of religions still resentment and contempt for the Catholics. I remember looking at a Catholic procession once when I was with this friend and I said, 'Isn't it terrible how many people still exist who believe in forms instead of in the real meaning of the thing!' He was extremely hurt, yet he was really progressive. It was amazing to me. But I had some reasons perhaps to be against the Catholics. They had their own political party, the Center party. We, the Protestants, looked at this party with great distrust; for we suspected it of taking its orders from abroad, from the Vatican, just as we suspected the Communist party of taking its orders from Moscow. Our history, since Luther's days, is full of this struggle between Catholics and Protestants. The separatist movements in southern Germany were—and are still—largely Catholic movements against the Protestant northern Germany. And there was still another thing which made me dislike the Catholics. Although they were in a coalition government with the Social Democrats, they were, constantly compro-

mising with the reactionaries. They were against coeducation, they were for the maintenance of sectarian schools, they were extremely reactionary in all cultural questions. So it was amazing to see a 'progressive left wing' Catholic and to discover that in their rank and file, too, there existed a division.

"I didn't meet many girls. Girls were in an overwhelming minority and they were mostly daughters of rich families, at least in Freiburg. But I learned to know one girl and I will put her before you. The faculty gave a dancing party, and I went. You know, I felt free for the first time. I had to count every penny but I felt gay as I had never felt in my whole life. I really began to go to dancing parties! I sat at a table with my Jewish friend and my Catholic friend and a girl came and said to me, 'I have watched you so long and I want to know you.' And she wore shoes with flat heels, too!

"Now, I still couldn't imagine anybody wanting to know me. What was I? Still a nothing! But I learned to know this girl, whose name was Susie. She was the daughter of a retired Prussian general and she invited me to her home. His Excellency was an extremely interesting and cultured person. He had a collection of Egyptian sculpture, he was absorbed in art, he knew German literature, and he had a real understanding of beauty. In short, here was a general who did not fit at all into the pattern of Prussian generals. He was a man whose profession and job had been to plan and make war, for whom it was natural that his son take up the same profession and job, yet he was a broad-minded and cultured person. He was married to an extremely bigoted Catholic woman. Susie and I became friends. One day she confessed to me that she didn't want to study philosophy and art, she really wanted to study medicine and become a doctor. I said, 'Why don't you tell your parents?' She said, 'Well, my parents think a girl can study art but cannot study medicine.' I said, 'That's silly; let me speak to your father.'

"Now her father was not too glad about Susie's friend-



ship with me. He respected me and thought that I was an 'amazingly modern girl,' but on the whole he liked his own daughter to be more old-fashioned. Yet he wanted to be modern too, so he did not object to Susie's studying medicine. Only, His Excellency the General did not know how to get that idea into his wife's head! He compromised. Susie was allowed to go to the Red Cross and become a nurse. This she did. After two years she got her diploma. She then worked as night nurse and studied medicine in the daytime for two more years. Only then did her mother give in and she was allowed to return home and finish her studies in Freiburg.

"I had my job as secretary for two semesters; then the office closed. During the last months I had got my salary irregularly, sometimes only at the tenth or twelfth of the month, and for days I could only live on bread and water and it even happened twice that I had only some sugar left but not even the money to buy bread, and I lived on sugar and water for days. I could have borrowed money, but I had my pride and I was afraid that I might not be able to pay it back. So I was in very poor health after the first year. I went to see one of the university doctors—the students could have free examinations—and he said if I went on this way I would develop tuberculosis. This frightened me. I went to a students' organization that was created to help in such cases, and got a free meal once a day in a sanatorium. Oh, was that a meal! When I think of it I still am glad.

"At the same time Lotte and Juergen came to Freiburg. Lotte had at that time two boys and was expecting her third child. She was terribly unhappy about it, since having one child after another kept her from taking up her dancing. But she didn't know what to do about it.

"Lotte did not love Juergen. Or did she? She was so full of contradiction. They just didn't belong together. He was the son of a peasant, she was a city child. He was slow, she was quick-witted. She hurt him with words, he hurt her with his fists. He wanted more and more children, a dozen

at least. He hated Lotte because he couldn't subdue her, couldn't be the master 'as men should be.'

"Juergen offered me a job. He had a very primitive printing press at that time—it had wooden plates with which he printed material for curtains, or for wall covers, and these plates had to be cleaned after each use. He paid me fifty pennies an hour. It was very difficult work. I worked there for two months, had lunch at the sanatorium, and in the evening I often ate with Lotte and Juergen, so I saved quite a lot of money.

"At last I decided to leave Freiburg and go to the university at Munich. I had to take a very expensive room at first. I found finally a room for which I had to clean the landlady's apartment and the kitchen. My room was extremely small, had no heating, and it was a very cold winter. My funds were so low that I had to tighten my belt again. At that time I took up smoking cigarettes, because the students' organization had taken over from a bankrupt firm I don't know how many cigarettes. Two cigarettes cost one penny so they were much cheaper than food.

"I was rather desperate. I had no money to pay tuition and I could only go to some public lectures. Besides, I was so disappointed in the university! Looking back at the two and a half years away from home I saw myself as a failure. Well, there were some assets: I had earned my living, I had won some fine friends, I had got good marks from my professors. I even had written a few short stories and poems. But, looking them over I shuddered. Stories, poems about God and nature when I had started out to learn the realities of life and how to better this world! In Munich it all came back to me. You know, Bavaria is really the most reactionary part of Germany. True, the old feudal cliques still existed in Prussia, yet industrial development was stronger there and its progressive aspects checked their power while Bavaria is, on the whole, a backward country and a stronghold of Catholicism. In Munich I learned really to know anti-Semitism and the Nazis. Here they were, at the university. They did not wear their uni-

forms; those were forbidden by decree. Yet they had the button with the swastika and the old reactionaries had the black-white-red button. And their faces; how crude their faces were! I was not willing to be part of them even though my family belonged to them. I found and joined the life of the so-called bohemians.

"These bohemians came mostly from small business and professional families who had lost the reserves with which in former times they would have given their children a good education. The children still had the ambition to be something intellectual, or to become artists, but had not the means. So they shared everything they had with each other, were very comradely, were naturally very free in sex matters, and drank a lot of cheap wine.

"I was glad to have company, but I was not happy. I had left home in order to find firm ground under my feet. Somehow, I wasn't the bohemian type; I was too much rooted in the solid ground of Grandmother's days. And then, this bohemian life wasn't the great famous one of the past any more. The old names of glory were gone. The bohemians who had fought against the Kaiserreich, who had fought battles to have plays of Ibsen performed, who had fought for women's emancipation and for a republic—those days were gone forever. The freed women had forgotten their liberators and had made their peace with society. Mother was just one of thousands. And the once liberal and progressive wing of the bourgeoisie had been decimated by inflation and disillusioned by the Republic and was now on its way to joining the reactionary, the counterrevolutionary forces. Father too was just one of thousands. The time of glory had gone; what was left was misery, cheap wine, and decay.

"I went one day to the famous Munich Carnival, the gay season before the Lent, usual in all Catholic countries. Well, I had one very strong rule to which I kept—never to dance more than twice with the same partner, because I knew from experience that in the third dance he would want a kiss. Now, having just been firm to one partner—

he had gone away finally, convinced that I didn't want a third dance—I sat there looking around me, when a Jewish boy came and asked whether I wanted to dance with him.

"I said, 'Yes, certainly.' He was an extremely bad dancer, he stepped on my feet constantly, but somehow he was very nice and natural, and we danced two dances together and I said, 'Now it's good-by.' While saying that, I lost the heel to my shoe, my first pair of shoes with high heels! There I was without a heel and this young man certainly had to help me. So, through this heel I learned to know him better. We talked together and he took me to his home the next day to meet his parents.

"This home decided, I think, the pattern my life was to take. His father, a medical doctor, was a Russian, a refugee from the 1905 revolution and a Menshevik. I had never in my life seen such a person. I will describe him for you. As rotund as Grandmother had been, very ugly, in some ways, to look at, a great nose with a big wart—he really looked, we could say, like a children's bogymen. But all about him was such an air of quietness, kindness, and broadness. If there is such a thing as a voice of utter tolerance, of utter understanding of everything, this was his voice. It was impossible for this deep and low and yet very well-modulated voice to judge anybody because he always tried to understand why a person was doing what he did. He was the personification of the ideal I had made of how Socialists and Jews should be. The mother was a very quiet woman who adored her husband and who was very gifted, talented for writing, but who had dedicated her years to the family and to one other purpose: to fight for the abolishment of the death penalty. His elder brother was a doctor, too, and a true pupil of his father.

"It was a cultured house, to which many artists of the old generation came, a house to which this boy brought all his girl friends, and I could truly say he met every week a new one. Many of them didn't come more than once. But I was one of the lucky ones and was accepted. I could

come there whenever I wanted, and even the maid, when opening the door to me, was glad and said, 'Oh, how nice to see you. We have missed you.' It made me feel I was really welcome. The whole atmosphere in that house was what I was looking for when I started out from home. I saw that the culture and the values that were dear to me were still alive—although where I came from they were being destroyed. I was happy and yet not happy, for I saw here something that was still firmly rooted. But I felt so decayed myself.

"Then I fell ill. I got a seemingly not very important influenza and had to stay in my room that could not be heated. Then this kind family took care that I went to a hospital, and as there now really was some sign that my lungs were not very strong, they made an application for me for university sickness insurance and I was sent to a sanatorium. I was there for three months and I recovered very well bodily, but not mentally. Against my wish the kind doctor wrote a letter to my mother explaining the condition I was in. He had said to me, 'There is no mother who wouldn't understand and help you along, and I am a medical doctor.' He was sure I would get some help from home but I said, 'The only thing they will offer is for me to come home, and I will not go.' Sure enough, Mother wrote back to him, 'My daughter can come home whenever she wishes to be our daughter in the right sense. I am not astonished at what has happened to her. A daughter who runs away from home will end in evil, and as Thomas Mann has said in his *Magic Mountain*, "tuberculosis is a sickness that comes from loose living."' My mother and Thomas Mann—those two belong together!

"Well, the doctor showed me this letter when I came back, and I felt myself so much defeated that, although I had not lived in the way my mother expected, I really accepted her judgment. But I said I would rather die than go home. I was utterly desperate and the good doctor saw it, and he took me to Toni Pfuelf, who kept me alive. Let me show you Toni, a Social Democratic member of the

German Reichstag, a small, very delicate-looking person, with hair cut short, with short curls, with a very clear but very lively voice. She was in some ways opposite to the doctor, and in some ways they were very much alike.

"She said to me in her clear voice, 'I have heard your story from our mutual friends. Come and live with me until you find your own feet!'

"Well, I felt I was not worthy, but I accepted her invitation.

"She lived in the bohemian district of Munich. She had a one-room apartment, a big sleeping room and studio together, and a big kitchen. The room was full of books, and a sleeping couch and her desk were there. It was all very simple, although she had a good salary as a member of the Parliament, and had her retired teacher's pension, too, for she took care of her mother, and I don't know how many other people.

"But soon we moved into another apartment which had two rooms. I slept in her study, and she had a little bedroom for herself. Every morning at five o'clock I was waked up with some kind of a singsong. This went, 'Poor little Toni, dear little Toni, no one will love you, dear poor little Toni, so you have to love yourself, dear little Toni.' So with this singsong repeated every morning she woke up from her sleep and made herself ready to work. She was an extremely good housewife. She did all the cooking herself, and the one bad thing about her was that she would not allow me to help her. I was not a great help in cooking, that I must confess, since Mother never shared her cooking knowledge with her children, but Toni did not allow me even to help in cleaning the apartment.

"Well, how did she come to be a socialist? She had been the daughter of a German major, a family military from tradition. She told me, 'As a child, I never heard a tender word from my parents. Once—I must have been five years old—I heard that in the paint on the wall there was some kind of poison, and one night I sat on my bed and licked the wall, because I hoped to die from the poison. My par-

ents loved my brother but I was only a girl; I had no value for them at all.'

"Toni fell in love later with a young lieutenant, and they were engaged and it would have been all right, but this lieutenant died in a duel. It had been rather a scandal. Her parents did not even permit her to go to the burial. She fell very ill after that, and when she had recovered she decided to leave home and earn her living.

"While studying she got tuberculosis of the lungs. The doctor told her that there was no hope for her. To show you the enormously strong will this woman had, she went high up into the mountains and lived there for two years all alone, only the shepherds bringing her things to eat. All that time she studied, and she came to socialistic books, to a book of Lili Braun's about woman's emancipation, to a book of Kautsky, who said that women could only achieve their emancipation if they threw in their lot with the workers. So by and by she became a convinced socialist.

"After she was well she went back and finished her studies. She found a woman doctor who shared her ideas and helped her in the same way she now intended to help me, so that she could become a teacher. When the Republic came she was already a very well-established member of the Social Democratic party. She was elected to the First National Assembly, and from then on she was always elected for the Reichstag.

"She had developed a weak heart, yet she always got up at five o'clock in the morning to study. She felt that she had much to learn, although her knowledge was far beyond that expected from a woman in politics. But she was on the Committee for Reform of German Civil Law, so she had to have much legal knowledge. In some ways she reminded me of my aunt Julia.

"Well, Toni visited the United States. She came back deeply impressed by the living conditions of the American workers and by the wealth and prosperity of this country. Yes, it was a time of happy prosperity and the great slogan

was 'We have prosperity forever.' Prosperity now began to come to Germany too, at last, and Toni was certain we would also have it forever. Her party believed so too; the Social Democrats thought the Republic safe just because they thought that prosperity would last and thus convince the people that democracy is the right way of life; and they believed that step by step they would advance toward a social basis for their democracy. This belief seemed to be right. There was no more killing; the Nazis were less noisy. They as well as the Communists showed a constant decline in all the elections while the Social Democrats were increasing. But would the Social Democrats have time enough? Their fatal mistake was that they took time for granted—while Hitler prepared for the depression to come, wrote his book *Mein Kampf*, ironed out his organization, and planned for his big chance.

"But it was so much nicer to think of a peaceful way toward democratic socialism. I joined the group of Social Democratic students at the university and I was soon elected vice-chairman. I cannot flatter myself that I earned this honor through any deeds or advanced knowledge in socialist or Marxist theory; my greatest assets were my name and my sex.

"I soon had my first conflict. I told you that anti-Semitism was extremely strong at the Munich university. Now the students' corps were preparing a centennial celebration of the university, yet the Jewish fraternities were not invited. The non-Jewish fraternities did not take Jews as members. The Jews had their own fraternities. These came to our Social Democratic group and told us we would have to take up the question of the celebration. I was ordered to put this question before the Student Assembly.

"Now, I am not anti-Semitic but, you see, these Jewish fraternities were built much after the same pattern as the others I hated so much, and many of them were even 'fighting fraternities,' too. They had duels and accepted the whole stupid 'code of honor.' They were rich people's sons, like the others born into privilege, and the only dif-



ference was that they were Jews. I felt that the socialists should let them fight their own battle.

"Our student assembly met and I began my speech this way: 'It has come to our knowledge that the Jewish fraternities were not invited to this celebration. That is a scandal. I want, however, to make one point clear at the beginning; namely, that I think all fraternities, alike, are stupid and ridiculous, whether they are Jewish or not Jewish.' There was such a storm of protest over this that the meeting had to be dissolved because order could not be restored. I had a fight in my own group, too, but I still feel the same way today—that every kind of fraternity insofar as it is not dangerous is at least silly, and I don't care for any discrimination in them, but only a discrimination against them.

"This uproar nearly cost me my scholarship. Applying for a grant, I had to have a special examination by a professor of Gothic language. He was known as reactionary, as detesting student girls, especially those with bobbed hair, and he hated all those he considered 'reds,' not distinguishing between right-wing democrats and communists. Now, I was a girl with bobbed hair, and by now known as a socialist—and that must just have been too much for him. He gave me a translation which was unusual even for the master's degree. I will never know which spirit helped me, but I did it and I got my scholarship!

"During the summer of 1926, Toni said to me, 'Well, it is time you saw something of the world. For this vacation you are going to Paris.' I was going to Paris! Toni said so, and so I went. I had letters to some Italian refugees and they took me to the International Congress of the Transport Workers' Union. This was the first time I had seen a meeting of workers. They came from all nations and they spoke about their working and living conditions and how to help one another. Here I understood the meaning of the words 'international solidarity.' "

"Was it a communist group?" I asked.

"No," Erna said. "I had letters from German socialists to Italian socialists. There must have been some communists there, since the working class, although divided into political parties, was not yet divided within their unions. As for me, I had not yet learned to see these differences. I took them still as a whole. And besides, they spoke all kinds of languages and I didn't understand much. But what I saw with my eyes was the way they treated one another and how they spoke, and I had the feeling they understood one another even if they had not a common language. There was certainly no discrimination of any kind.

"And, yes, there was one thing more. Germany had in fact become a member of the League of Nations at that time. But I and many of my generation could not forget that it had been the League of the Victors who had refused us on the ground that we were the guilty people. Do not forget that the idealism of Wilson was gone long since. There was no spark left that could lighten the heart of a young generation. But here, among the workers, was international solidarity and they seemed so much more fitted to create a peaceful understanding between nations than the League was. It seemed so reasonable that those who have always to die in battle are the ones who are the most interested in preventing a new war.

"When I came back to Munich, I wanted to meet more workers. One day Toni said to me, 'I am giving a lecture this evening to the Social Democratic women. Won't you come along with me?' 'Oh,' I said, 'I would love so much to hear you lecture.' Toni spoke on the right of women to the same wages as men have. While listening to her lecture, however, I was distracted by looking at the women. They were Bavarians, strong and stolid, and sitting there knitting their stockings, you could see they were plain housewives. I couldn't see any fighting spirit in them. I told Toni my impression. She said, 'Well, the poor women have so many burdens to carry that you can't expect from

them a revolutionary spark.' But somehow it worried me and I felt rather disappointed.

"Through Toni I had learned to know a teaching professor at a Catholic boys' high school. He was a fine man and a born educator. His boys at school adored him. So did I, and I spoke with him about everything that just occupied my mind. I told him of this disappointment too. He said, 'You know, you go to this matter with the wrong view. You are against the bourgeoisie. The workers are not. What they want is not to make revolution or civil war but to get as much security in their lives as possible in order to care for their children and get a better education for them. They have no other wish than to have just what the bourgeoisie has, namely, security.'

"So I had to learn that the average worker is not a revolutionary, which I had thought he was. The average worker, in his heart, is a good family father."

"And conservative!" I put in, having my own knowledge of working people.

"And conservative," Erna agreed.

"But if they are pressed too hard they will fight, and, I believe, not only for themselves but for equality for all and liberty for all. You see, there are still things in which I believe, at least until history will prove me wrong.

"On Toni's advice I went to the University of Frankfurt to get my Ph.D. I had to bury myself in books and study hard. I had chosen a theme for my dissertation. It was on 'The Literature of Young Germany.' This was the name of a circle of writers who had lived at the time of the German war of liberation against Napoleon and the 1848 revolution. I saw in their writing the fighting spirit against feudalism and I saw, too, how after the defeat they changed from fighting to a cowardly adjustment to feudal values in life and culture. But what sociological facts lay behind history and culture? This I had learned to ask in the Lichtwark School. I had learned there the conception of life as a unity composed of many different branches which were all interrelated. At the universities all these

branches were taken apart and cut off from their roots, every one of them taken as an unrelated thing, with special laws of its own. It is this 'division of life' that makes our educational institutions so dry, so unrelated, so dead. I wanted to restore in my studies the interrelation of art, history, and sociology. Quite a big aim, wasn't it? Well, I got thoroughly confused, and I sat at my desk biting at my penholder, just as I did in the old days.

"While I did so there came to the university in January, 1928, a much discussed, much argued about man, who had just published a very broad and big book, *Imperialism*. His name was Sternberg. Everybody said I had to go to his lecture. However, for some reason I didn't go. Next day at our after-lunch coffee, where our group usually met, I saw a rather wild-looking man with a bush of hair, and having about him an immense vitality and intensity. He spoke very intensely with a socialist girl about problems of German youth. He said to her, 'Well, naturally, naturally'—he has a very sure way of saying everything—'naturally, the abyss between your parents and you must be much greater than it was in any other generation because of the different world you have grown into.'

"I listened and thought, 'Well, it seems here is an older man'—he looked older than he really was—'who seems to understand the problems of our generation, too.' I listened carefully, and after some time he looked at me and asked straightforwardly, 'What did you think of the meeting last night?'

"I gathered that he had been the lecturer of the evening before. So, somewhat disconcerted, I looked around, and then he said, 'I have a rendezvous with these two people here this evening,' meaning the girl at his side and a boy a little away from him, 'and it would be nice for us four to come together.' I was interested in him. I said, 'Well, I will if you promise me to answer some questions which I have concerning my study, for I think you can help me.' He said, 'I promise you that.'

"With the intention of putting these questions to him,

I went that evening to the café. The other girl didn't come. I immediately began to tell Sternberg about my study.

" 'What you have to study is economics, economics, economics,' he immediately said. 'What you lack is a knowledge of economics, economics, economics.' "

"Then he asked me what I was doing. I told him that I belonged to the Social Democratic party. You know, nearly everyone asked everybody else which party he belonged to and this had become more important than the family. Even Mother had long since learned to ask, at least in her second question, the political party of a new acquaintance. I told Sternberg that I belonged to the pacifist group of this party. He just looked at me and asked, 'And you think that with pacifism you can avoid another war?'

"I said, 'Well, it is the only means I see.' He laughed scornfully and then he said, 'You are a Utopian. The historical alternative put before us is not war or pacifism but fascism or socialism, and, facts being as they are, you can't have socialism without fighting for it.' Immediately I remarked, 'You seem to be a communist.' 'No, I am not,' he replied with vigor, 'but that does not mean that I am going to deceive myself or the workers.'

"Well, I sat there and listened while he spoke with the other students who came in. I didn't understand many of the problems they discussed, but I watched him. He had a way of throwing his assumptions at the others' heads; yet I noticed, too, that he had sound knowledge and that he knew what he was talking about. He said, 'The middle class is doomed, but they will not accept defeat without fight.'

"The middle class is doomed! That was what Father had said, too. For a long time, I forgot to listen and thought of Father and of my home and I was no longer sure, at all, that fascism could not happen to us. It sounds queer, doesn't it, that we in Germany said just that? Yet we did; we looked at the Italians with moral disgust and were

sure that fascism could never happen in Germany. I sometimes think that this Philistine self-righteousness was one more reason why it could happen to us.

"It was late and I still hadn't been able to ask about my most urgent problems of sociology. When Sternberg talks, he talks. So, when he asked my permission to walk home with me, I accepted, hoping to have a chance to get my questions started. I lived rather far away, and we went over a bridge, and on this bridge he stopped and said, 'You are the woman I want for my wife.' Really, we had just met one another and I had no mind to fall in love! I said, rather foolishly, 'To how many thousands of women have you said that?' He was quite surprised. He said, 'Tomorrow I have to leave. I have a lecture here in the neighborhood. I shall come back the next day. I shall have only forty minutes in Frankfurt and then I have to go to Berlin, but I will wait in Berlin for you and you are going to be my wife, because I want you.'

"Well, I married him later, but at that moment I only thought: 'Male arrogance!' We took leave that night and I promised to be at the station.

"Now I did the thing which he will never forget. I was still very divided within myself. He was so interesting and I wanted to learn and learn the many things I could learn from him, and yet, as I said, this male arrogance I found terrible. So I made a compromise within myself. For his male arrogance, I would not go for the first twenty minutes of his forty-minute stay, and for the interest I had in him I would go for the last twenty minutes.

"When I came to the platform of the station, he was there, running around very nervously, and he saw me and said, 'Why did you come too late?' I said, 'Because I could not make up my mind.' He said, 'We have no time to discuss that now. Will you write to me?' I said, 'Why should we write letters? We have just met one another.' 'But I will write to you and you have to write me,' he insisted. And then he took a heavy book he carried and gave it to me and said, 'You have to read it and write me immedi-

ately about it.' It was his *Imperialism*. And with that he had to go on the train and leave for Berlin.

"As a matter of fact, I had intended to go to Berlin during the Easter vacation even before I had met Sternberg. I needed many books for my Ph.D. which I could not get in Frankfurt and I had written to Hilde, who lived in Berlin, and had asked whether I could stay in her house for a few weeks. Now I went to Hilde and Robert. Robert had lost his idealism. He no longer wanted to 'reform the Junkers.' 'Let the Republic take care of them,' he said. All he wanted now was to earn money and have fun. He had a good job as director of an agricultural bank, and they owned a nice house in a wealthy Berlin district, with a beautiful garden for their daughter. They even intended to buy a car! You know, cars in Germany were not what they were in America. They were very expensive. A middle-class family could hardly buy one and for workers to think of buying a car seemed something out of this world. You have to come to America to see and to believe that workers can have cars. That Hilde and Robert intended to buy a car, and bought it some months later, showed clearly that they were climbing high up the ladder. Hilde wanted to have a car, if only to show how well off they were, yet she still had her gift of keeping things together and she still quarreled with Robert when he wanted to go to a night club. He wanted to make up for all the fun that had been denied to him in his youth, during the war and when he had to rush through his studies. Yet on the whole they were still happy together.

"Juergen and Lotte lived in Berlin, too. They had two sons and one daughter. I liked the daughter most. She had quite a temper, but she was a personality. I stayed at Lotte's home overnight. Next morning, very early, I heard a quite determined voice say, 'I am here, Aunt Erna.' I opened my eyes and there stood my niece, and her whole face expressed her strong determination that this new aunt was now to pay her attention.

"Lotte and Juergen were always hard pressed financially. Now and then, Juergen sold drawings and Lotte gave dancing lessons. They did not quarrel so much as they had in Freiburg, but the only tie that held them together was their children.

"Mother came to Berlin, too, while I was there. She hadn't changed much. She still called herself a democrat and she was curious to meet her prospective son-in-law, Sternberg.

"Well, coming to Berlin, I had called Sternberg up, but with the conflict still in my heart I had put down a wrong telephone number. At the telephone number I dialed there was no Sternberg whatever. So I wrote him a card, 'I am in Berlin, please call me up.' Immediately he called me up, and we met. The first thing this terrible man said was, 'I nearly was going to be unfaithful to you.' Said I, 'How can you be unfaithful to me, if there is no promise of faith or anything between us?' But he simply took it for granted that we belonged together and who was I to disappoint such firm and strong belief?

"Mother and he met. And Mother disapproved strongly of him. And, for once, I might say that I had some understanding. It was just too much for her: a Jew and a Marxist to marry her daughter!

"Father I did not see but he had still his fish business and he had earned enough money to have Mother's feet operated on. He had even started savings accounts for his grandchildren, just as Grandmother had done for us.

"I worked hard at the library and finished my study about 'Young Germany' and Sternberg did finally answer all questions I asked. Yet, he had a very strict rule: I was only permitted to visit him after I had written and worked through at least five pages of my study. He fascinated me enormously by his immense knowledge of facts and even more by his broad knowledge in many fields, and he had, indeed, what I was looking for; a total conception of life and the knowledge of the interrelations of its many branches. With him, Marxism was a means by which



to understand our present time, a means with errors and mistakes but with the power to correct the mistakes. This was not the Marxism of our communist students who used to end all arguments by saying, 'Marx has written on page thirty in this book' and 'has written in another book on page fifty,' or 'Stalin said in his last speech,' and considered this the end of all discussion and thought.

"Well, now I lived in Berlin, the capital of the Republic. I visited modern theaters, I went to all kinds of meetings, I sat listening in circles of Sternberg's friends. And the Republic continued, and we felt safe and secure with 'everlasting prosperity' to give us freedom and the utmost of democracy. Yes, we had real democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, and freedom for as many parties as the people wanted. Even Hitler was pardoned."

"Who owned the newspapers?" I asked.

"Our newspaper organization was quite different from yours here in America," Erna replied. "We had more independent newspapers, not so syndicated and concentrated. We had privately owned newspapers and party newspapers. The workers had, naturally, their daily newspapers, too, and all over the country.

"It would be too long to tell of all the things I discussed with Sternberg. But one question we discussed time and again—my pacifism. I was stubborn in my pacifism and despite every reason I kept to it, although Sternberg cornered me. Capitalism, he argued, is through its own laws constantly forced to be on the lookout for new markets abroad. Thus the competition for these markets will lead to ever new wars. Capitalism is, therefore, constantly forced to find new forms, new ideologies, to stir up national emotions in the people so that they will be ready to wage wars which they might refuse to do if they saw them as imperialistic wars for new markets. Only socialism with its planned economy will be able to plan production and consumption in relation to one another, and therefore will not be forced to look out for new markets.

Socialism, however, we cannot have with pacifism, since the reactionary fascist movements will fight, sooner or later. This was Sternberg's conception and I had no arguments against it."

"Would he call England socialistic now?" I asked.

"Yes, in taking the first real steps in nationalizing the key industries," Erna answered.

"Would he call Soviet Russia the perfect socialism?" I asked next.

"By no means," Erna said with energy. "Russia is on its way, too, and may come to it, but socialism in the classic conception requires that the means of production be great enough to provide a better living for everyone. Russia has not the means of production, up to now, to provide everybody with the necessities of life. But it would go too far to speak about all the contradictions which result from 'not enough production' which is so different from the American problem of 'too much production.' If you asked Sternberg today, 'Will England achieve socialism after having taken the first steps?' he would probably say, 'No, because they have not time enough. They won't have quiet decades in which to move step by step toward socialism because the enemy will take action, too, and the more you advance the more he will react.'"

"The enemy being whom?" I asked.

"The Tories," she replied simply. I was silent and she went on.

"Well, I returned to Frankfurt to finish college. But once more politics intervened. We had, in May, 1928, new Reichstag elections. The reactionaries went into these elections with the slogan 'Money for rearmament.' The Social Democratic party had the slogan 'Money for lunches for needy children.' Once again the Social Democrats came out as the strongest party; nine million votes, or thirty per cent of all the votes. So they seemed right, after all. The Republic was safe and secure from within. Yet, here is a strange thing. Only a few weeks after the elections the Social Democratic party did vote in the Parliament for

'Money for rearmament.' The Social Democrats were not aggressive, they were not for war. But they wanted the German Republic to be safe against aggression from outside. And they felt themselves strong enough to see to it that those armaments would never be used for aggressive war. This is so extremely important for Americans to understand. It is the old and still urgent question: Who controls the weapons to which the people agree for safety's sake? Are they sure that not only today, but tomorrow and the next day after tomorrow, the people will still have the control over the weapons, over the atomic bomb, for which they pay with their taxes, with their sweat?

"I did not see the terrible danger of rearmament so clearly, at that time, but I knew well enough that one nation cannot disarm and be safe so long as other nations stay armed. Yet at the same time I knew of the temptation to use arms, once they are produced. Well, a minority in our group proposed a letter of protest to the Social Democratic members in the Reichstag. The majority refused on the ground of party discipline. I left the party, seeing no other means of protest."

"Did Sternberg belong to a party?" I asked.

"No, he did not," she said.

"Did many of these young people go into the Communist party at that stage?" I asked.

"No. Not many," she replied. "They remained unorganized. I, too, joined no other party. Within the rank and file of the Social Democratic party there was a strong sympathy for Russia, yet a great distrust and even hatred of the Communists.

"Well, being now unorganized, I had time enough to finish my studies. I passed my examinations. I got my Ph.D. and I wired this news immediately to Sternberg, Toni, and my parents. Now life could begin, my life with Sternberg. We made our trip to France. It was a wonderful trip. Alas, I took the same trip later when I was transported to the concentration camp of Gurs, but that of course did not shadow our life, then. After our trip, we

moved to Berlin. I wanted to write and to earn my living and be independent. With my Ph.D., I got more for my articles even in the workers' press. I wrote about all kinds of women's questions, about laws for women in the factory, about how certain kinds of work affected women's health, about safety devices. I had my study on 'Young Germany' printed and a well-known newspaper published part of it. This newspaper offered me a job, too. I was to write a monthly review of new publications about women or by women.

"In the autumn of 1928, Sternberg wrote an article for a union monthly, 'Economy and Science,' in which he predicted that we would soon have the worst crisis capitalism had ever had, with long-term unemployment, and that with it we would have a new danger of fascism.

"It seemed crazy. We were still in this everlasting prosperity and the Republic had proved in the last elections that it was secure. Not only had the Social Democratic party come out as the strongest party, but the Nazis had come down from their inflation peak of two million votes to only eight hundred thousand votes—the 'incurables,' we called them, the 'adventurers who could not find back their way to civilian life.' In former times, most of them would probably have had a military career, but disarmament had dislocated them. Yet they would never again be dangerous or try a new 'Beer Cellar Putsch'—so we thought. But Sternberg was certain that the middle class would rather turn fascist than side with the workers."

I wanted to get this clear. I asked: "He believed that the middle class led straight to fascism?"

"Yes," she said. "The liberals and the socialists laughed at him at that time, and the editor who had published his article nearly lost his own job.

"One year later, at the end of 1929, the first signs of depression came and in 1930 we were in it."

## VIII

**L**OOKING back at this depression, I ask myself this question: 'Why didn't we fight the crisis as America did? Was it really because we had no Roosevelt? Why did Hitler win?' America and Germany were the two countries hit hardest by the economic crisis and in nearly the same ways. They had the same decrease in production, and in income, and in relative proportions about the same number of unemployed.

"Yet America was not Germany. America participated in the First World War for only a short time, with relatively small losses and without hunger and cold for the people. America was not the vanquished but the victor, although in its happy isolation it was unaware of the meaning and the commitments of this fact. America had an uninterrupted boom for nearly a decade and no inflation so that her workers and her middle class went into the depression with the buffer of large savings. America had only a short crisis immediately after the war. Thus her fascists, her Ku Klux Klan, had not time to prepare the minds of the people, while German fascists had the time and the occasion during our long, long inflation. You have seen the people in Germany settle down; yet time was too short; they were not rooted anew. A new storm could easily unsettle them.

"This I saw clearly in Hilde's home. I had not seen her often; she did not like Sternberg, as you can imagine. Now, however, she invited me for dinner. She was extremely nice, had omelets filled with jelly for dinner, knowing how I loved that.

"Robert was out. I asked Hilde whether she expected him to come home soon. She said, very abruptly, 'No, he is in the country and will stay for a few days.' Her mouth was set hard. Yet we didn't speak more about it since her daughter sat at the table, too.

"After dinner, she put her daughter to bed. Then she came down into the living room with her mending basket. I don't know how she always managed to find something to mend in her well-kept household with a maid working full time. Yet, having enjoyed the omelets, I felt myself compelled to darn a few socks too, and since we didn't know what to talk about she turned on the radio.

"While darning, I looked at her face—beautiful but without expression. And all at once I had the feeling that her face, which had been somewhat softer for years, had changed now to its enclosed mask again. 'Really, Hilde,' I said, 'you should go out once in a while, if only to see a movie. You are going to be an old woman soon if you go on living as you do.'

"And all at once Hilde began to cry. I had never seen her shed tears. She bit her lips immediately—she certainly didn't want anybody to see her cry. But there it was and I said, 'Better tell me what's the matter.'

"Well, the matter was that Robert was more away than at home, and Hilde insisted that he never had been on business trips as much as now. I asked, 'But what is he doing?' She told me that the agricultural loan bank, where he was employed, was in great difficulties; loans due were not paid and new loans were asked for, instead, and Robert had to visit the estates and find out what could be done. I couldn't keep myself from saying, 'I see—money is still the weak spot of our Junkers.' At that, Hilde changed immediately. All friendliness was gone, the old hostility was back, and in her familiar arrogant voice she said, 'You and Robert! You both enjoy it when you can hit the Junkers. As if the peasants weren't just as deep in debt as the Junkers!'

"So we were no longer two sisters, mending peacefully

and talking of ourselves; we were enemies, one for, the other against, the Junkers and all they stood for. I remembered immediately how I had seen Hilde and Robert on the big estate during inflation and I knew that they had now other things to quarrel about than only the question of whether to go out and have fun or stay home. The 'fronts' were there again.

"Well, we sat there together, watching every word we spoke. I left as soon as possible. Thus I did not learn that evening that Robert, on his business trips, was accompanied by a secretary, a simple girl who had no sympathy or respect for the Junkers. My guess is that she liked just to go to night clubs and have fun. I learned of her only when Hilde called me up weeks later and asked me to visit her again and then told me that Robert was going to divorce her. So, you see, even here, even in the last corner of private life, the formation of the fronts was over and action began. Robert became a member of the National Socialist party, helping them in their battle for 'agricultural self-sufficiency,' a slogan meaning that Germany should be, in case of a new war, invulnerable against a British blockade!

"But on one point Hilde was right. The depression affected the whole of agriculture, the entire 'Green Front' from the peasants to the Junkers. For the peasants the most difficult question always was the question of sons. Many generations ago the land had been divided between them, reducing it to ever smaller farms. Then this policy had been given up, and for generations the eldest sons got the farms while the others were paid off. To pay them off, the farms had to be mortgaged, and this was the main reason why they were highly mortgaged anew although they had paid off their old mortgages during inflation.

"I think the American book which we Europeans understand best is *The Grapes of Wrath* by Steinbeck. It made me aware of how similar our problems are and how different from those of the Russian peasant under the Czar. The Russian peasant knew his master. He knew

exactly the working hours he put in for his master. He saw his master's luxury with his own eyes. But the German peasant and the American farmer are their own masters. Or are they? Remember in *The Grapes of Wrath* when the banks sent their employees with the tractors to crush the homes of the farmers, so that the farmers had not even roofs over their heads. The farmers wanted to go against the employee who destroyed their homes, seeing in him their enemy, the 'guilty one.' But the employee drove the tractor and destroyed the farmer's home only for a small salary and he himself had a family to care for. Who, then, was the really guilty one? It is this impersonality of modern production, this system of middle man upon middle man, of administrator upon administrator, of employee upon employee squeezed in between the top and the bottom, that makes it so hard for us to see through it. It is, basically, the fascist apparatus. Our system of modern production is cruel and irresponsible.

"But there is one great difference between the American *Grapes of Wrath* and the German. Your farmers did what Americans have done for generations: they took to the road. There was no longer a new frontier to be opened up but this was new for them. For Europeans it had been so for centuries. That is why European peasants cling to their soil with their nails and their teeth. So, when the German banks sent their men to confiscate the cattle, the peasants slaughtered their livestock; when they came for the crops the peasants burned their crops, and when they came for their farms, the peasants united and beat them off with shovels and hay forks, and finally with guns and bombs. It was the century-old pattern of self-defense.

"For this, Hitler was prepared. His slogans were ready. Question: 'Who takes away your livestock?' Answer: 'The banks.' Question: 'Who takes away your farms?' Answer: 'The banks.' Question: 'Who owns the banks?' Answer: 'The Jews.' Question: 'Who supports the Jews?' Answer: 'The Republic.' As simply as that this propaganda was hammered into the heads of the peasants. It was prepared



by Feder. Do you remember how Father, during inflation, had bought, on the fish market, a pamphlet by this same Feder which divided the capital into creative, non-Jewish capital and parasitic Jewish capital? Well, the great banks were not owned or controlled by Jews but by non-Jews. But facts never seem to matter when one searches for 'the guilty one.'

"The influence of the Nazis grew rapidly in the country. Wherever there was a burning or a beating, there were the Nazis. The law-abiding Social Democrats had not a chance with the peasants. And the Communists? Well, Russia, out of her own necessities, was just going through her period of collectivization, her battle against the independent farms. So how could the Communists ever convince the German peasant that he would keep his farm if Communist rule were established in Germany?

"But what was going on in the cities? We say, 'The problem of capitalism is how to find a profitable market for overproduction.' But how is the middle-class man in the cities to know that? He doesn't produce, he doesn't see production. The only thing he knows is that he sells less and that his small margin of profit becomes smaller."

"Is this vicious condition of overproduction without expanding necessarily a part of capitalism?" I asked. "Can you imagine an enlightened capitalist system which would have the common sense to see that developing markets must go along with increased production?"

"There are many enlightened capitalists in this country, who see the problem," Erna replied. "But how can they solve it? Capitalism, with its free competition, forces the capitalists constantly to modernize their equipment, which means that more goods are produced with less manpower. No one can escape this law. Basically you have here the same problem which Father faced in his fish market. One fish dealer alone couldn't stop giving credit or else he would have lost his customers; and one enlightened capitalist cannot stop modernizing his equipment, because others will go on making his equipment obsolete. Thus

overproduction is necessarily a part of capitalism. And the capitalists have always tried to develop new markets. America solved this problem by opening up new frontiers on her own vast continent, while the European countries tried to solve it through imperialistic expansion in colonial empires. Now America has no more new frontiers. Let's see whether her enlightened capitalists will now follow the old European pattern or whether they will find a new and better solution.

"I ought to speak of the workers first since their unemployment is in the last resort the reason why the middle men in the cities sell less and have a smaller margin of profit. It is so simple: unemployed workers have no money to buy, and millions of unemployed induce big business to reduce the wages of those still employed, so that their purchasing power shrinks, too. So the misery of the middle class is but a result of this simple fact which they could not understand.

"I want to tell you first of our grocery store at the corner. They were nice people, and we were good customers, always paying cash. They did not yet become actually aggressive, but their faces looked grim and they didn't look you straight into your eyes any longer. Sternberg had once explained to me that 'unemployment of the middle class drives them back into themselves.' I understood now what he meant. I saw the son of our grocer come back to his parents with his wife and his child. I learned that he had started a stationery store but had to give it up. Depression drove him back into his 'home,' a two-room apartment in the back of the grocery store, and the clerk was fired because the son and his wife helped in the store. Now such middle-class salaried clerks looked with hatred upon the workers, the 'reds' who got unemployment insurance while they got nothing, because they were not organized and inflation had swallowed their savings.

"Hitler had his slogans ready for them, too. 'Who robbed the middle class of their savings during inflation?'  
—'The stock exchange, the jobbers, the Jews.' 'Who sup-

ports the Jews?'—'The Republic.' And for the dismissed help: 'Who gets unemployment insurance?'—'The reds.' As simply as that, he hammered it into the heads of the middle-class people day and night; by gossip, by newspapers and leaflets, by all means at his disposal.

"The very streets began to change. The unemployed came, making here at this corner a little stand with hamburgers; at another corner a little stand with ice cream; at another corner one with cigarettes, thus trying to earn a few pennies to get them through the day.

"Depression was no time to buy paintings or take dancing lessons. Lotte and Juergen could no longer pay their rent. My parents had a four-room apartment. Lotte asked Mother whether she would take her children until the worst time was over. Mother came immediately. You should have seen the hardly concealed triumph on her face, as if she had waited during all these years for this moment when she seemed right, after all. A marriage of which she had disapproved had to fail some day.

"Only if you can understand this triumph of hers can you understand what fascism meant to her, after Hitler had come to power and confined the women once again to home, kitchen, and family. I mentioned earlier my American friend who had said, 'The trouble with us women is that we don't know what we are supposed to be.' The problem for women is being limited to a household which is, through industrial development, more and more deprived of its creative usefulness while at the same time society has given no other place to them—except in wartimes. The Nazis by no means restored the old home with its creative usefulness as one finds it still in largely agricultural countries. What the Nazis did was to restore its glory in slogans while they left the women as unsatisfied as before.

"Well, Mother took Lotte's children and she did her best to let Lotte's marriage fail. Lotte visited her children and each time she returned to Berlin more desperate. Instead of trying to hold these children to their natural and

real mother, Mother used to say to them morning and night, 'You are here because your own mother can't take care of you.' When they did not behave she said, 'Here you are to learn how to behave, since your mother seems to have been unable to teach you.' It never entered her mind that she was educating these children to doubt their mother. She was convinced that she now finally had a hold on them and that what she did was best for them. I do not know and I don't want to say that without this the marriage would have lasted, but I know that Lotte's helpless hatred against Mother was transferred into a hatred against her husband who could not provide for the children. It was terrible to see my bold, quick-witted sister lose her sense of humor and become bitter and tired and worn out. She finally decided to divorce Juergen.

"I couldn't help her. I lost my job on the newspaper where I wrote the monthly review of women's literature. I got for review a book by Clara Viebig, *The Woman with a Thousand Children*. The woman in question was a teacher with a thousand pupils. In her conflict between marriage and her pupils, poor people's children who needed her, she decided to renounce marriage. But a campaign was going on against the 'double earners,' meaning couples where both earned their living. This campaign was above all directed against women teachers. We had had under the Kaiser a law against married women teachers. The Republic had abolished this law over the protest of reactionaries. Now they took up their battle again under cover of the slogan against 'double earners.' And this time, with the bitter competition in the labor market between men and women, the reactionaries won their battle. There was not a word of this in Clara Viebig's book, instead there was only acceptance and the glorification of a woman who accepts her 'fate.' But my review was not printed and no more books were sent to me.

"The union monthly, too, printed hardly any new articles by myself or by Sternberg. You know, it is funny, but Sternberg is such an imposing personality that it took

me years to get used to calling him by his first name, and even today if I do not agree with him or am mad at him—as it happens, I guess, in every marriage once in a while—I still fall back into my old habit of calling him by his family name. Well, to the Social Democratic leaders the depression was but one of the many crises in the cycle which is necessarily a part of capitalism. They said, 'We have only to wait until the self-healing forces of capitalism overcome the crisis.' It was in another language, the American approach that 'prosperity is just around the corner.' Their policy thus was the same old policy, to tighten the belt during the depression and make up for the losses when prosperity comes out of its corner once again. Sternberg's thesis, however, was that we were in a new phase, that prosperity could not be restored by the self-healing forces of capitalism, and that, therefore, the policy would not work. This depression would be solved either with socialism or with fascism.

"The editor who had published his forecast of the coming crisis was quite willing to publish more by him, but the Social Democratic leaders of the trade unions did not permit it. The unions were no longer the same as they had been before. It is not easy to make the followers accept a policy of 'tighten your belt,' without tightening democracy, too. Thus, freedom of speech, freedom of the press were more and more curtailed even in the Social Democratic press. This did not help to solve the crisis, nor did it weaken the Communists. On the contrary, many a Social Democratic worker who had been faithful to his organization just because he saw it as a democratic organization now said, 'If I have the same brass hats on both sides I may as well go to the Communists.'

"Yet the main reason for the constantly growing communist influence was another one. The young generation was, by and large, the most deeply affected by the depression. The youngsters who had just come out of school and could find no jobs; the young men who had not yet worked long enough to get unemployment insurance or higher

wages; the youngsters who wanted to marry, yet had nothing to offer to the girls they loved. Many of them came into our house to tell their stories. They came with their girls and they were desperate, or they came to complain about their fathers who reproached them for their 'idleness'—it was always the same. 'Tighten your belt' was not a popular slogan. The Communist slogan, 'Look at the Soviet Union, the paradise where no unemployment exists,' gave them at least hope.

"Yet the greatest winner of the crisis was Hitler and his party. He had turned the resentment of the farmers into hatred against the cities, the Jews, and the Republic; he had turned the resentment of the middle man into hatred against his neighbor's store, the Jews, and the Republic. And he turned the resentment of the young and unemployed generation into hatred against the old ones who were still employed. And this was his technique: Wherever there was evil within the people, he brought it into the open, he made it look natural and justified. So the people lost their fear and their inhibitions which centuries of culture and civilization had instilled within us.

"We had new elections at the end of 1930. Once again the Social Democratic party, which had created the Republic, come out as strongest. The second strongest party was the National Socialist party with six and a half million votes! Remember, they had come down to eight hundred thousand at the peak of prosperity. Now they grew bold; now they took out their uniforms again and began to parade in the streets. Now the killing and the shooting began once more. Even if we had had a Roosevelt, the inflation-shocked German middle class would not have supported him.

"I could not bear to remain 'unorganized' any longer. There was no other force left but the workers to fight and beat off fascism. But which party should I choose? I chose none; I offered my help to an organization which emphasized that it was above party and which had as its slogan 'Unite in action and forget your differences until the com-

mon enemy is defeated.' For a few weeks I worked with them. Ach! Those workers! I could go on telling stories about them without end. There was, for instance the free-thinker who would have nothing to do with the Church. He had been a Catholic and he lived in a Catholic district. He was one of the first to lose his job. He had sacrificed enormously for his opinion. In his bedroom, however, hung a big picture of the Madonna. I was a bit amused to find this picture in the house of a freethinker. Then he said, 'You know, in former years I saved a lot of money to pay for this rather expensive frame. Now I have not even the money to change the picture and there is so much money in the frame!' And yet I firmly believe that at the bottom there was something more to it with him than the question of money. Somehow, there was the hope, the desire that maybe a time would come when he could believe in God again!

"There were among the Communists many wonderful workers who were ready for every sacrifice for their cause, ready even to go hungry and give their small pennies to the party, who were always willing to run on their feet to carry leaflets and to sacrifice for the cause in which they saw their only hope. Yet I soon discovered that this organization was not really for united action of both parties but used the slogan only to unite the workers under Communist leadership. So many workers who had come to the meetings in good faith left immediately."

"Do German workers still associate the leader concept with the Communist party?" I asked.

"Yes, absolutely," Erna replied. "The German workers have a real and deep conception and a great tradition of democracy. We had a strong workers' movement and a strong Social Democratic party for decades before the First World War. It was a party which longed for democracy, which fought and sacrificed for it, and which had in itself a real democratic structure, quite different from the leader concept of the Communist party. The younger generation did not always share this great tradition. Yet the question

of a democratic party principle and the principle of leadership is still one of the main differences between the two parties. But there was still more to it. The real slogan of the Communists became more and more 'The main enemy is the social fascist in the factories'—meaning the Social Democratic rank and file. It was even worse: it was an appeal to the unemployed to turn against the workers still occupied. It deepened the split within the working class. Was it stupidity or did they think it a clever policy? I do not know, I turned my back in disgust and was 'unorganized' once again.

"At that time, Lotte had just been divorced after a bitter fight for her children. She was to keep her daughter, but her sons were to stay with their father. Mother came to Berlin to bring back the daughter. Hilde was in the midst of her divorce procedure, fighting with means fair and unfair to keep her husband and her home. One afternoon Mother came to have tea with us. After Sternberg had withdrawn to his own room she said, 'I still do not approve of you but at least you seem to get along together well.' Poor Mother! How down she must have been to say such a thing!

"I had not seen Father for many years and I was curious to see him again. I knew that he had become a member of the National Socialist party. But what had he to say? So when Sternberg had to lecture in Hamburg I decided to accompany him and thus I returned home for the first time in many years. We had dinner at home, then we went to the lecture, my parents included. Sternberg spoke about the situation of the middle class. He explained that it was not the workers who had ruined them but the big factories with their modern equipment; that it was not the workers who curtailed their small margin of profit but big business, to which the retailers had to pay prices kept as high as possible while leaving it to the independent shopkeeper to reduce his prices, his only means to keep up with the competition of his neighboring shop on the same street.

"Well, as you can imagine, I sat there and thought,



'Now Father must really understand where he belongs. I might have failed to convince him because I had not these clear arguments. But now he must see.' Sternberg had to return to Berlin that same night, but I had decided to stay with my parents for a few days. Father was tired and so we didn't speak much that evening. Mother came to say good night and she remarked, 'Well, that wasn't exactly news for your father. He has known that for a long time.'

"Next afternoon, after Father had had his lunch and his nap we took a walk together along the Alster, and he said, 'The lecture was extremely interesting, but it really was no news for me.' I asked, 'Then why don't you side with the workers?' Father said, 'Hitler promises us more than we will ever get from the workers.' So I asked, 'But what has Hitler to offer you?' And my father immediately replied, 'Free rent, for instance.'"

"Were they promising free rent, too?" I asked Erna.

"Yes, to the tenants," she replied with a little smile. "To the landlords they promised higher rents. They promised lower wages to the industrialists, and higher wages to the workers. They promised everything to everybody, so each could pick up just the thing he wanted most. Father, for instance, was hard up with his fish business. I learned later that he took all the money from the savings accounts he had started for his grandchildren during prosperity. He used it to pay the rent so that Mother could stay in her nice apartment with four bright rooms and a little garden.

"It was really amazing what Hitler did promise. His party's program was extremely clever. They even had a footnote in which they promised the dividing up of the Junkers' estates. There was no logic to it and you couldn't fight them with logic. Hitler's entire propaganda was to stir the emotions and silence reason."

"But if fascists have only words, then you don't need anything but words?" I asked.

"Ah, fascists have their arrogance only when they have pistols in their pockets or the armed Storm Trooper at their backs," Erna retorted. "But Father was one of those

who believed in Hitler's 'socialism,' and he took the slogans seriously. I asked him, "What does socialism mean for you?" and he answered, "Cars for everyone, for instance. It is a scandal that America has cars for everyone already. Why don't we have them? Let us produce a cheap car and we will be a step closer to socialism." Hitler, by the way, really built big factories later for the 'people's cars,' as the slogan went. Behind this slogan and the factories he covered up his preparations for war. The 'people's cars' were only produced at the beginning, then the factories were turned over to the production of tanks.

"But I will tell you more about Father, because I think he is really typical in the way he 'was deceived and deceived himself.' He believed that Hitler was democratic. What was this democracy, to his mind? Hitler promised to establish a one-class system on the trains, to abolish the cheap compartments with wooden benches, and to give all classes upholstered benches. This, Father called 'democracy.' Hitler naturally did not fulfill this promise or the promise of 'free rents.'

" 'Well,' I said, "But Father, you know as well as I do that in the end Hitler means war.' Father denied this. He said, 'Hitler promises a strong Germany and I think that this is the best guarantee for peace. And, besides, it is time that we got an army and a military draft so that the youngsters are taken off the street and taught some discipline.' And then he said, 'The Republic doesn't do anything but talk and talk and make matters worse, so why shouldn't I give Hitler a chance?' "

"And he, being really a liberal man for his time, thought of Hitler as a liberal?" I said incredulously.

"He saw himself still as a liberal," Erna replied with sadness. "He was my own father, yet time and misery had changed him that much. I know that the fear of communism played a part, too, in his change, because he said, 'Russia has taught us that when communism comes, I and my kind will be the ones who will get killed.' That the wind could be taken out of the communist sails if he and

his kind would help to better the world for all, so that all could live decently and peacefully, this idea never entered his mind.

"Yet he still saw himself as an anticapitalist. He said, 'We are as good socialists as you are. The only difference is that we will establish socialism peacefully while you want civil war.' Now, that was really going too far—with all my pacifism to hear that! I said, sarcastically, 'I suppose that's why Hitler keeps his Storm Troops.' At that, Father got angry. He said, 'And I promise you that you will be the first to be put at the wall and shot.'

"Do you see now why you couldn't argue with them? You might be shocked that I speak about it so openly but there is no use in concealing it. Father did not want to be reminded about the Storm Troops which were to do the killing. He wanted to close his eyes and leave the terror to Hitler and his hangmen.

"Well, I have not yet spoken of Hitler's Storm Troops. They were not the same as the Elite Guard. Within the National Socialist party, the Elite Guard were the fine people, the Storm Troops were the common men. Their leaders, those who gave them the 'military training' in fist fights and shooting, were mostly old Free Corps. Their boss was Roehm, who had been in South America for years. By the way, many of the Nazi leaders were not Germans or not educated in Germany. Hitler was an Austrian, Hess had grown up in Egypt, Rosenberg, the 'philosopher' of the party, had lived in the Baltic provinces before the First World War, and these provinces had been part of Russia under the czarist regime. The rank and file of the Storm Troops were peasant's sons who could not be paid off and the rest were unemployed and young men who were utterly desperate. Many of them had once been in the Communist party, seeing their only hope in a revolution which was to bring them bread and freedom. But they had to survive in order to enjoy freedom, and the Storm Troops offered them soup and a jacket. It was a brown jacket and they had to pay a terrible price—they had to

betray their friends of yesterday, they would have to beat them and some day even to kill them. It is cruel, yet it is simple—that you have to survive first.

“We knew many workers, young workers who, since it was impossible to get a job, stayed in bed all day so that they might not get hungry, so that their shoe soles might hold a bit longer. But when leaflets were to be carried they came out. Upstairs, downstairs they went to take the leaflets to the people so that the people might understand what was going on.

“But the workers’ party had nothing to offer them—no soup, no jackets. Where did Hitler get his money? It could not be squeezed out of the workers’ pennies nor out of the impoverished middle class. But we knew that the leaders of big business had met Hitler, openly. Yes, the fine people began now to collaborate with Hitler. Did they discuss already the possibility of a war for new markets? Or did they, at that time, only discuss how to get rid of the Republic? What we saw was that shortly after this meeting Hitler was swimming in money.

“Well, it would take too long to tell you step by step how the Republic failed. It was assaulted from both sides, from the communists and the fascists. The Republic might still have survived if it had been willing to fight. But the Social Democratic leadership retreated step by step and their only policy still was ‘tighten the belt.’ The Catholic Bruening and his Center party took over. Bruening became chancellor. His first decree was the so-called ‘emergency decree’ to reduce the salaries of all officials and of all employees; as if reducing the purchasing power of the masses could overcome a crisis which resulted from overproduction! It was the old pattern. Prices down—wages down—prices down—wages down, until a new market could open up by miracle—or, if no miracle happened, by war.

“And the Catholics! While the whole German people was at stake they had no greater worries than to make a law for bathing suits. Bathing suits should not show so much flesh, they said, so a law decided how many inches

could be shown! The few things the Weimar Republic had done for education were reduced. My old school had to discharge many of the teachers on the ground that they were reds and this school which had been the beginning of a new progressive thinking fell into the hands of reactionaries until the Nazis took over in the end.

"The Social Democratic leaders supported Bruening and his policy. Their rank and file was by now ready to fight against the Nazis. Both workers' parties had created defense organizations against the Storm Troops. Both were ready to fight. ~~I still think the socialists had a fair chance to win the masses of the workers if they had only fought. They did not do so. Had we fought, there might perhaps never have been the Second World War. And I think~~ Americans can understand this better today, because they too did not want to fight but had in the end also to take up arms. Only, the German workers in their fight had no allies ready to fight with them.

"I was 'organized' again in a small new party which had but one slogan, 'Unity, unity, unity.' Today I can see that we could not succeed. The workers, too, wanted unity—but of their two parties and not within a third party. At that time, however, I saw it as a last hope. I had hardly any personal life. Too much had happened and the individual seemed of no importance in this clash between the two Germanys. Was Hitler to make a Putsch now? He had learned his lesson. He was not going to have another defeat. Up to now he had used democratic means to come to power. ~~This we must see because it shows the weakness of democracy. To a very large degree Hitler could come to power within the framework of democracy with all its freedom, its liberty, its free election.~~

"Then, something happened. It looked as if the lowest point of depression had been reached; economy showed slowly and reluctantly the first signs of recovery. Now Hitler showed the first signs of weakening. In communal and provincial elections during the late autumn 1932 his votes decreased. And it was obvious that he was again financially

hard pressed. Did big business hope that the crisis could yet be overcome without fascism, without ceding to Hitler part of its power? Did it stop supporting Hitler, stop playing with fire? We have no proof but as I said we saw that Hitler lacked money once more.

"His own movement showed signs of inner revolt, too. The Storm Troops and the little people who began to feel that Hitler had sold them out to big business became impatient. They wanted finally to have their 'night with the long knives.'"

I asked, "What does that mean, 'the night with the long knives'?"

Erna said, "It is a phrase which came from St. Bartholomew's Massacre centuries ago when the Huguenots were slaughtered in France. Grandmother, as I told you, came from such a family who escaped into Germany. Hitler always used these traditional slogans which seized upon men's emotions. The 'night of the long knives' meant that the Storm Troops would have the streets free to kill whom-ever they wanted to kill. That was what Hitler had promised them, and that was what they were waiting for."

"Whom did they want to kill?" I asked.

"They just wanted to kill everybody who looked like Jew or red," Erna replied, "or the shopkeeper who competed at the next corner, or the landlord who asked for the rent! They just wanted to kill somebody whom they considered as the guilty one for their misery."

I said, "I think we must stop there a minute, because that's going to bewilder Americans."

"Then the Americans here should think of the Ku Klux Klan," Erna said calmly and went on. "Now here and there groups of them began to revolt against Hitler. And we saw all these signs of weakening and decay in Hitler's movement and hope came back to us. The workers' press of both parties wrote, 'The worst is over.' It looked indeed as if fascism could still be defeated by democratic means."

"Hitler saw this, too. He had to act before the signs of

recovery became too visible. With democratic means alone he could not win. He had to act, and to act at once.

~~1~~ In the main he acted in two ways: To those within his rank and file he gave more 'freedom'—freedom to kill. The terror grew constantly all over the country and especially in small towns and villages where his followers had the majority. Every day you could see in the newspapers new names of leftist people who were killed. To show you how it was I will tell you a story.

"Sternberg, during all the month of January, 1933, was going from one meeting to another, in small towns in Saxony and Silesia, and sometimes friends used to ask me, 'Well, how is Sternberg coming along?' And I would then say, 'I haven't had a letter from him, but his name isn't in the newspapers, so I think he is still alive.'

"Yes, that was the first thing I did morning upon morning—look through the newspapers and sigh with relief when I did not find his name anywhere. It was just as it had been during the war when the people looked anxiously through the daily list of new losses to learn whether their beloved ones were dead or still alive. It was war.

"At the same time Hitler stormed the last corner of resistance on the side of the reactionaries: the Junkers. He got them at their ever weak spot—money. He threatened to expose a scandal which was later called the 'Eastern Emergency Scandal.' It was a government fund given for the needy east German peasants, but it had been used for and by the Junkers! He blackmailed them until the Junker General von Hindenburg, president of the Republic, who had until now refused to meet Hitler, the private, yielded to blackmail and nominated Hitler chancellor of Germany. Thus, Hitler became chancellor legally and officially, and within the framework of democracy the administrative and executive powers of the Republic were now at his disposal.

~~/~~ "Four weeks later his gang laid fire to the Reichstag building. It was a symbolic act, a signal for his followers throughout the Reich that he was now in power and that

he intended to stay in power. It was an act directed at the strange emotional excitement in millions of people which makes them run at the sound of the fire siren to look at the fire. Hitler and his gang always knew which emotions to stir—and for what purpose.

"He was prepared. He was in Berlin. It was 'natural' that the Chancellor of the Reich was informed and that he raced to the spot. Immediately he said that 'the reds' had started the fire. Immediately he issued a decree which made his Storm Troops and his Elite Guards 'auxiliary police.' His Storm Troops and Elite Guards were already miraculously at their posts at the police stations to take over as auxiliary police. Two hours after the Reichstag fire had started the lists of the 'criminals' were ready all over the Reich. Thousands and thousands of people were arrested during the night. The admirers of Hitler used to call his prepared actions 'miracles in efficiency.'

"We were not prepared for it. We, the parties of the Republic, were only preparing for the new Reichstag elections which were to be held a few days later. Hitler had ordered them immediately after he had become chancellor. Do you see why he started the Reichstag fire? He wanted the majority of the votes. He did not get it! Even with the Reichstag fire and the red bogymen who had started it, even with all his terrorism, he did not get the majority at the elections. He came close, he got forty-six per cent, but he did not get the majority.

"None of us was prepared for fascism. When we heard the news of the Reichstag fire, we thought maybe the fire was started by accident and the Nazis only used it for their propaganda. We stayed at home that night, and thousands were arrested. They came for Sternberg, too. We were lucky. We had just moved into a smaller apartment in the same house. They came to the old apartment, searched, and found no Sternberg, and they finally went away. We heard of it next morning from the new tenant. We heard next morning too of arrests from all sides and left immediately.



"It was not easy to find a place to live. Our friends were all in danger. Where could we go? Now we knew a doctor who once, when every other doctor had thought that Sternberg was not to live, had saved his life. He had cured a very rich Dutchman and this Dutchman had bought a little private hospital in Berlin for him. There we went.

"If I think of those two weeks after the Reichstag fire, I don't understand it even now. We were so terribly busy. We were writing letters. My typewriter was going day and night. We really made hard efforts to fight Hitler with typewriters! None of the left organizations was prepared for underground, even the Communists. We ourselves had no passwords for our groups, no way of writing the seemingly harmless letters we needed for secret communications. We had no code words, so we had to send couriers who very often didn't know whether the people they were to meet were still free or were already arrested. I only tell you this to show you how utterly unprepared the left was."

I interrupted Erna. "Can we say 'the democratic forces' were, instead of saying 'left'? People here in America are so afraid of communism."

Erna gave one of her rare laughs. "You know," she said, "I have one difficulty about using this 'democratic'—this word 'democratic forces.' Our democratic party merged with the National Socialist party. That is why I am so reluctant to use the word 'democratic.' American democracy with its freedom and its liberties is a fine thing, but it is only safe if and when people can live decently within a democracy. This we Germans learned—but we learned it too late.

"Well, we actually had the elections a few days after the Reichstag fire—elections under terror, but the Nazis still did not get the majority of the votes. But Hitler saw to it that he got the majority in the Reichstag. He outlawed the Communist party and this was how he got the majority. With the same act he checked the conservatives, the old reactionary clique. How? The conservatives had just

enough votes left to decide the balance in Parliament, so they thought. But after the Communist members had been arrested, Hitler was no longer dependent on the conservatives. He had his majority without them. Thus, those who had thought they could make Hitler do the dirty work for them, to beat the reds and the Republic, so that they could then take over themselves, now found themselves caught in the net and dependent on the Nazis.

"So, Hitler came to power and the story of fascism from now on is the story not of how it happened, but of Hitler in power, which is quite a different story—the story of terror and war.

"Now, back to us—we decided that it was time Sternberg left the country. He is not the type to disguise—not at all! And, having been a public figure, he was known to tens of thousands of people. I was not yet ready to leave—being an old sentimental, I loved my country, and I lived in a nightmare, unable to think. Sternberg said Hitler would stay in power a long time. I ought to have trusted Sternberg by then, but it was too much to believe. So I could not leave Germany.

"I went with him, however, to lead him safely over the border. We had been many times in the mountains at the Czech border, and knew all the roads there. We went over the mountains to Czechoslovakia and there I left him, and I went back to Berlin alone. For ages, it seemed, I had not been a person—I had only been part of an organization, and I had lived with Sternberg. Now, Sternberg was not there, nor was there an organization of which I was a part. I was on my own again, and it was a queer feeling.

"Well, I had given Sternberg most of the money we had. The poor man—it was stolen from him down to the last penny when he came to Vienna. But we had still a lot of money to collect for articles for which we had not been paid. So I went looking for editors. I had been away from Berlin ten days, and the editors were gone. I remember coming to one of the great buildings where I should have

got money. I saw many police cars. I watched at the corner and saw that the building was just being taken over by the Nazis. And I went away, knowing my money was lost.

"I had other things to do, too. I had to clear the apartment of now forbidden papers, files, leaflets. I burned boxes and boxes full of them. I had decided to give up the apartment.

"But the next morning when I was packing the last things, the house bell rang and I opened the door. There stood two 'auxiliary policemen' in their Nazi uniforms. I am a terrible coward, really. I am afraid of snakes, of mice, of fire, of many things. But when I saw these men in their uniforms I was not afraid. I think my hatred was stronger than my fear. They entered and asked immediately, 'Where is Sternberg?' I said, 'I have no idea. My guess is that he has left Germany.' They wanted to search the apartment—we had but two rooms and they looked into both of them. Then they wanted to see what was in those boxes I had packed. One of these boxes was full of Marxist and Jewish literature! I said, 'You can unpack every box you want. But you have to pack them again. I won't have that trouble twice.' That took them by surprise, and they stood there. I had to get them out somehow because I was expecting a Jewish worker to come by, and I knew he wouldn't have a chance to get away, once they got him. So I said, 'By the way, have you a search warrant?' They said, 'We don't need one. We are the police, now.' So I said, 'But how can I know? I must insist on seeing your superior, before I let you go on with your search.' I was so insistent that after some arguing they really took me along 'under arrest,' as they said, not without some pride of their new power and authority. They took me to their new headquarters, the Horst Wessel House, the former Communist Karl Liebknecht House. I had my line of defense prepared when we came to the Horst Wessel House. I told them that I intended to leave Sternberg and go back to my parents and I made quite a fuss about my father being a party member—and I tell you frankly my

greatest worry was that they would call Father by long distance! Fortunately for me, the Gestapo apparatus was not yet so 'perfectly' functioning. They let me go late in the afternoon. It was not too bad—I had chances which others didn't have.

"It wouldn't do to stay in the apartment any longer. They might think it over and come back, next day. There was only one shelter left—my sister Hilde. She was divorced and lived in a nice apartment in one of the well-to-do districts. I called her up. I will not say that I was desperate. I had no time to be desperate, I was only dead tired, so tired I didn't know how to keep my eyes open.

"I called Hilde and said, 'Hilde, can I have one night's sleep in your apartment?' And she said, 'Come along.' So I went."

"Did she know that you had been arrested?" I asked.

"No. I told her that later," Erna replied. "She gave me some sandwiches, and made tea, and after I had eaten, the first thing she said was, 'I hope now you realize that you were wrong!'

"It had never come into my head that only because we antifascists were defeated, our ideas could be wrong. And Hilde really thought I would realize by now that, being defeated, we must have been wrong.

"But I saw immediately that she was sincere, and I said, 'Well, Hilde, if you have let me come here with the thought that I have given up what I believe in, you are wrong, and I am ready to leave any minute if you don't want to keep me.' But Hilde always had a very strong sense of family, and she said, 'You go to sleep now.'

"I had a good night's sleep. Next morning I had quite a fever. Hilde said, 'You will stay here and I will call the doctor.'

"I stayed there in her home for five days and, I must say, I had never been so close to her in all my life. I understood her at that time more than I had ever understood her before. I remember that once I said to her, in those days, 'I think the trouble with you is that Father beat all the

vitality out of you when you were young.' She said, 'You know, I could hate Father, but I always knew he was right, because authority has to be. If you don't beat people they will be beasts!' Then she said, 'You have only to look at Hitler and his mob. There you have all those youngsters who were not beaten by their fathers at home or their teachers in school. They did not learn discipline in the Army, either. That's because of your *laissez faire*, and the ridiculous softness of the Weimar Republic.'

"Hilde was not a Nazi. With her heart, with her emotions, with her thinking she belonged to the reactionaries, to the Junker clique, and she actually left Germany in disgust two years later. But I asked her that day, 'Hilde, don't you think that the reactionaries are defeated by Hitler, too?' She was too proud to admit it. She only said, 'Maybe in a certain way. But then, you see, Hitler will come to reason now that he is in power and has responsibilities. He will get rid of the mob, and will grow up to be a man that accepts our rules.'

"Hitler, indeed, got rid of what Hilde called his mob, when he killed Roehm and many others of the Storm Troops who dared to remind him of his 'socialist' promises—as they understood socialism! It was the price Hitler paid for his peace with the Junkers and the Reichswehr. He killed with the same coup one of the Junkers, too, General von Schleicher. Yes, and I ought to tell you that Hilde's beloved uncle George committed suicide. Do you remember Uncle George with his big estate? He had always been an old-fashioned conservative, believing earnestly in his 'code of honor.' He was utterly disillusioned and disgusted at last.

"From Hilde I learned, too, of Mother's cousin in Cologne, the former U-boat commander. He had just become the Nazi mayor of Cologne. Hilde said, 'I hope he'll save our aunt's factory.' They needed a 'savior' since depression had brought them close to bankruptcy.

"I was with Hilde at the day of the first boycott against the Jewish stores. She found it disgusting, much more dis-

gusting than the concentration camps in which the progressive and leftist were now imprisoned regardless of their race. 'I'm sorry for the Jews,' she said, 'but Hitler had to throw some bones to the dogs that helped him to power. It will blow over, soon.' She shrugged her shoulders, and next day she went to her Jewish store and bought there as usual. I don't know what she said when the extermination of the Jews really began. I must confess that I, too, did not think that that could ever happen. But then, we were only at the beginning of fascism.

"I had to make one concession to Hilde—she said that as long as I stayed in her home I was not to get in touch with any of my friends. I kept to this condition as much as I could. But to get out of her house I had to get in touch with my friends, or I would be left standing in the street again. So I called Lotte. Lotte had only one room in which she lived with her little daughter, and the studio she used for her lessons was rented by many dancing teachers together. She said, 'Oh, come over! I am so eager to see you.' So I told Hilde, 'I am going to see Lotte.' Later Hilde called while I was there to ask whether I was really there!

"Well, Lotte was very glad to see me still free. I told her all that had happened and she thought that I should leave Germany immediately. Then she told me that one of the dancing teachers had vanished. People had seen him led away by the Gestapo, and that was all that was known. 'Imagine,' Lotte said, 'he just vanished!' And she had the same look in her eyes that she used to have in her childhood when she told ghost stories. It had happened, yet it couldn't be real—it was something out of a ghost story. Here in a big city with streetcars and with houses, in the modern age, people couldn't 'just vanish.' I asked her whether he had any friends who could ask what had become of him. Lotte said, 'Nobody knows where to ask. The last we saw were two Gestapo men.' The only advice I could give her was to ask for the Gestapo headquarters, but I couldn't really advise her or any of her friends to go

there because it would not have saved this man and would have only led to other people 'just vanishing.'

"Lotte asked me to stay until her daughter came back from school, but I said, 'It is better for her to know nothing about my visit. You never know what children talk about.' Then I asked her if I could use her telephone, and I got in touch with one of my friends and made an appointment with him for the next afternoon. I hadn't used Hilde's telephone, so I still went back to Hilde. But I didn't feel right about it. I still had a rather old-fashioned sense of honor which was hard to get over. Somehow, I was an old conservative, just like the workers, conservative at the bottom but a revolutionary because I saw no other way.

"I met my friend the next day in a café in a well-to-do district, where I knew there was music, so that we could speak and people around us couldn't hear us. He told me who was still free, who had escaped, who was arrested. And then he said, 'I am glad to meet you. You know, you should be out of Germany because we have rented a room in an apartment for our underground press in your name, and it has been raided. I couldn't get in touch with you because I didn't know where you were. You had better get out now.' Well, this decided the issue about which I hadn't been able to make up my mind—now I really had to go. It still was hard. We talked on and he said, 'Our only hope now is that the Red Army will march in.' I said, 'Fantastic idea!' It was a hope to which many still clung at that time. In a desperate situation one has many unrealistic hopes of self-preservation. We just had to cling to hopes, but I knew the Russians had struggles of their own. Even if they wanted to, which I doubted, they could not possibly have come to our rescue."

"What made him think that they would help?" I asked.

Erna hesitated. "You see," she said, "he was a worker and he saw in Russia a socialist country and the land of the working class of this world. Sympathy for Russia went far into the rank and file of the Social Democratic party."

too, although they hated our own Communists. There were still some people who hoped that Russia would come to our aid.

"My friend left the café, and I stayed. It was one of the rules of that time always to leave separately, so that in case somebody should have observed us, only one would get caught.

"I sat there looking around and I saw a familiar face. It was my school friend Gretel, who had been delegate with me in the school parliament of old days and who told me first of the Lichtwark School. I went to her table. She looked not very well and she told me she had married a teacher and they had both been teaching in the same school during the depression. Then came the law that man and wife could not both earn and naturally the wife was the one who had to leave her job. A year ago her husband had lost his job as being too progressive for the little town they lived in. They had come to Berlin, hoping to find work, and after months he had found a job as an employee in a travel agency.

"We spoke of old times. There was nothing to speak of in the present. She had heard that Wolfgang had become a member of the Nazi Elite Guard. 'Yes,' I said, 'I think he belongs there. He is just the right type for them—blond, blue eyes, hair neat, and trousers always perfectly pressed.'

"Gretel said, 'I think I would have been happier if I had never been at that Lichtwark School. What use is it to me now that I once believed in freedom, in equality, in peaceful understanding, in democracy?'

"Yes, we had had all the freedoms except the freedom to live. Millions of people were victims of economic forces which they could neither understand nor manage and they felt their helplessness so great that they had looked out for a strong Fuehrer who would manage their lives for them. It was not because they did not want democracy—my father, too, had wanted democracy. Father was one of those who had greeted with joy the building of the new republic. But none of us could survive in a democracy



which did not give us freedom from want, the freedom to earn our living.

"Well, according to my friend's advice, I should have left Germany immediately. I did leave Berlin next morning, but there was one person to whom I must say good-by before I left—Toni Pfuef.

"So I went to Munich and I lived there, in a second private hospital which the same doctor owned. There I saw the march of the Storm Troops on the day of the great book burning. I wandered along the lines of the Storm Troops. I saw the crude faces of these Bavarian peasants. I had always been afraid of them—always! They were rough and cruel, they drank beer with a terrible noise, they always shouted loudly, they were always ready to take out their knives when some man only looked at a girl of theirs. None of them, I was sure, had ever read one of the books that were to be burned, or had ever known one of the authors' names. And going along these long lines of Storm Troops I thought that it was indeed quite in the tradition of the Catholic Church to burn—it was nothing new for them, they had done it through centuries of inquisition.

"I hadn't seen Toni for a long time. She looked terrible. She had always such lively eyes, full of life—fighting eyes, you would say. Now her eyes were tired, and there was not much fighting power left in them. It had hurt her terribly when I had left the Social Democratic party, but still we were very devoted to one another. I told her that Sternberg had gone and that I had to leave soon. When I asked her, 'What do you intend to do?' she said, 'I shall stay—until the last minute—until my death.'

"She urged me to leave before the next Reichstag meeting—Hitler was in power but there were still Reichstag meetings! Toni said, 'The Social Democratic members of Parliament will vote against Hitler. I know that we will all be arrested on the spot, but I have enough veronal on my person. I don't want the Nazis to take me alive, and I know that from the day that we vote against Hitler a

new wave of terror will set in. Please leave before this Reichstag meeting!' 'Toni,' I dared to say, 'do you really believe that there are any left who will vote against Hitler? Your best men are either arrested or have gone from Germany. What is left? Only those who either want peace because they hope to save some framework of an organization, or who are only cowards or traitors.' But Toni, although she had seen many mistakes, could never and would never believe that the party that had once stood up against Bismarck and had created the Weimar Republic would not vote against Hitler.

"She went to the Reichstag. The Social Democratic party did not vote against Hitler! Still keeping the party discipline, she left the Reichstag before the vote was taken. She went back to Munich on the train and in this train she took the veronal. I learned that only when I was already in exile. She was taken to a hospital and saved, but eight days later she did the same job more thoroughly and died.

"My other friend, the Russian doctor, who had first brought me to her, had died some years ago. His wife, seeing all that was coming, committed suicide. There was a wave of suicides over the country. And the sons had already left Germany.

"I left Germany, too. Sternberg was in Switzerland. He knew a Swiss student, in Munich, who was familiar with all the small roads over the mountains, and Sternberg sent him to meet me and take me safely across. We went on a day when it was raining hard but we went over safely on foot.

"Even in the safe country of Switzerland for a long time I woke up early in the morning frightened when I heard a car stop before our house. It was always at dawn when the Nazis came to arrest people in Germany, and every one of us listened in the quiet hours of dawn for a car to stop at the door. It took me weeks to get over this fear. The same thing happened to me later when I came to America. It took me months before I had the feeling that a plane

flying over my head wouldn't do something to me. America was still in deep peace when I came here, and people couldn't understand how anyone could get frightened at a plane. And another thing was that still my heart had a feeling of cramp when I heard the fire sirens, because they were so much like the air-raid alarms in France. So I know how it must take years for shell-shocked nations to recover.

"For some years we stayed in Basle. Later we went to Paris. One of the persons of old times I heard of was Susie, the general's daughter. One day an old Jewish friend, whom Susie had met through me, told me that he had come to Freiburg, had not known how to go over the border, had met Susie on the street. Susie was a good skier, knew all the little roads in the mountains that led to Switzerland, and had led him safely to Switzerland.

"I wrote to Susie, asking her to visit me. I had it in my mind that she could help others, too, but naturally, I didn't write that in my letter. But Susie wrote back that she had helped this friend out of the memory of the old and happy days, but she was devoted to her parents and she wouldn't endanger them, so please would I stop writing to her.

"My parents and I, through all this struggle, still wrote at least at birthdays and at Christmas. I shall never forget the first letter from Father after he heard I was in Switzerland. It was a letter full of understanding in which he said, 'You and I are very much alike, we are both people who fight for their cause. You were always the daughter nearest to my heart, and I will never overcome the sad feeling I have that you went the other way.' It was the letter of a victor, who had won and could afford to be generous, and, as it is not so usual that victors are generous, I want to tell it. The later letters I got from him became more and more bitter, more and more full of hatred against the Jews. He never again wrote to me about Hitler. Through his letters I could follow the ever growing anti-Semitic propaganda of Hitler. ~~The Jews were the 'guilty ones'~~

for what? For the misery of the little man—so Hitler said. It is the old story of the thief, crying to the crowd, 'Hold the thief!' while pointing at another. It was Hitler's preparation for war, his war economy with its concentration in big industries, that ruined the small man eventually. Never in German history had the number of independent businessmen decreased so rapidly as at the time when Hitler was preparing his war. ~~Father lost his fish business, too. But Hitler shouted by day and by night, 'The guilty ones are the Jews.'~~

"The Jews have suffered beyond conception, but the damage which anti-Semitism has done to the Germans is terrible, too. I hope that some day people will learn that race discrimination is a boomerang, for it keeps us from making a world where all can live in decency and peace.

"My Jewish friend Edith Holzman came to Switzerland for a few days. She was married to a non-Jewish German and she returned to Germany—I hope she is still alive! She told me how my mother, on the day of the first boycott against Jewish stores, had called her mother on the telephone and had said, 'I want you to know that I shall remain always your friend. But you must concede that the Jews are parasitic.' And Edith said, 'Please forgive me for telling you this, but I want you to know why my mother has ended their friendship. It was hard for her—you know how fond she was of your mother.'

"How well I understood it! Mother, the beautiful woman, with her beautiful-sounding words and ideas—how guilty I had felt, when I hated her! Maybe I should have told Mother Holzman how I saw my mother, but it isn't easy for a daughter to open the closed doors of a family home. Maybe Mother Holzman wouldn't even have believed it.

"But I must tell you, too, what Edith said to me about Father. She said, 'We have always pitied your mother for being married to your father. But it is disgusting to see her now that she earns their living.' And Edith told me that Mother had rented a big house in the district of the

'best Hamburg families' and had made a boardinghouse out of it and most of her boarders were—Japanese; and naturally none of the subdued and impoverished Japanese people but of the Japanese ruling class.

"Mother did write to me about Hitler. Every one of her letters was full of praise and adoration for the 'Savior,' as she called him. Her language was even more beautiful than in the time of the Kaiserreich and of the Republic. She 'assured' me that concentration camps did not exist except in the propaganda lies of the Jews and the Allies. At Christmas, 1936, she wrote that I ought by now to have realized how wrong I had been and that I could return to her whenever I was ready. I didn't answer that letter. It was the last I received.

"I had Hilde's last letter at the beginning of the war in Europe. She asked me whether I could not find a way for her to get back to Germany. She was in Africa and she wrote that it was so difficult there since the British had forbidden beating the natives. She had not changed. People had to be beaten and kept in place! I think it never entered her mind that this was not the right attitude.

"I heard from Lotte, too. She had written to me that she still gave dancing lessons, although it was tiresome since many of the modern dances were not now allowed. The last letter I got from her was a few months before the outbreak of the war. It seemed to me that at last she had waked up. She wrote, 'I should have cared for politics earlier in my life. My sons are Nazis. Why did I ever have to bear sons who will now be soldiers and get killed for the sake of wrong things?' She finally had discovered what was going to happen, and she had the terrible conflict of mothers, who want to keep their families out of the troubles of this world, only to see them be killed in wars, because they themselves had not fought at the right time. Of her daughter she wrote a very sweet thing that I am vain enough to be proud of. She said, 'My daughter is very much like you. She is just the dreaming type you always were, and just the stubborn type you always were.' So I

have some hope that sometime I will learn that this daughter of hers never became a Nazi.

"Yes, that was the last I heard of my family. I do not know whether they are still alive. I have told their story not to excuse anything, but really to warn people how it happens."

Erna paused, her eyes bitter with memory. "Well, we waited for the end of Hitler. He could not bring prosperity back. Oh, we saw that he made jobs—he took the youngsters off the street, he put them in labor camps and had them build the big highways for the coming people's cars. Factories were built and expanded to produce them. It looked as if my father would get the cheap car Hitler had promised. I remember the last speech we had heard by Hitler on the radio in an inn at the Czech border before I brought Sternberg over to Czechoslovakia. It was such a typical speech, the things at which we had always laughed but which always impressed the little people. He had said, 'What is a car? A car is a means of independence from the railways. With a car you are a free man! You no longer have to care about time schedules! You can stop where you want! You can go out whenever you want!' Quite 'unpolitical,' wasn't it, this speech in which he promised the people cars?

"But he couldn't solve the depression with the people's car and with wages and salaries that made it impossible for them to buy their cars. He would have to close the factories for lack of a market, or else soon start a war for new markets—so we thought. Instead, he rearmed under the slogan 'For a strong Germany,' he began his war-preparation economy which 'solved' the crisis. It was new at that time; it had never been done before. I remember when Sternberg first told me that this was the secret behind Hitler's prosperity, I would not believe it. And for years I could not believe that the Allies would let him prepare his war, would appease him, would yield to his demand—inconceivably far beyond anything for which the Weimar Republic had tried to bargain.

"How could Hitler bring the German workers to produce arms? It was done through our modern mode of production. We know today that reconversion of factories for 'people's cars' into factories for tanks can be very quick. It was a new thing at that time, one which we had to learn. And how easily this modern production can deceive people! It is so extremely important to realize this.

"I remember a story. Yes, jokes came out of Germany, too, bitter jokes from the embittered and enslaved German workers. It must have been 1938 when I heard this joke, because I was in Paris then. A worker met a friend on the street. One said, 'How do you do, and how is your family?' The friend said, 'Well, my wife is expecting a child and I am rather worried. I am not earning much and I don't know where I can get the money to buy a carriage for the child.' Said the worker, 'Oh, I can easily help you. Our factory is building children's carriages. We produce it in parts, it is not assembled and you have to do this job yourself, but I will give you all the different parts.' This the worker did. A few months later he met his friend carrying his baby on his arm. Said he, 'Why don't you have your baby in the carriage?' Said the friend, 'I put those parts together time and again, but all I could make out of it was a machine gun!'

/"I think it is a good story to show how deceiving this kind of production is, where men do not complete one thing from the beginning to the end with their own hands, where they see only part of it, where their brains function so that they can only see part of it. Yes, workers on the atomic bomb, too, didn't know what they were producing. Even the scientists who discovered the atomic bomb, who now are afraid of their weapon, cannot stop the production of the atomic bomb. The only ones who can stop the production are those who produce it, the workers.

"But, I suppose, like our own German workers, they dare not give up their jobs. Our workers were antifascists but they had their wives, their children, they had the family to think of. The personal conflict of everyone was terrible

—the conflict between responsibility for their families and responsibility for the cause they believed in. The average man cannot bear this conflict for years. More and more they fell silent, yet never was there a time when there were none who spoke against what was happening. Never was there a month when there were not new antifascists caught and sentenced to concentration camps. But the whole mass of the German working class, although it never became fascist, tried to be unpolitical, tried not to think. They hated Hitler, but they saw no way to get rid of him. You know, years and years of Hitler gave new conditions and changed human beings. Only the strongest kept up, and the strongest had more and more to be ruthless in their means.

“I have not much left to tell about Germany. It was hard, it was bitter, in France where we went from Switzerland. But I am glad I was there for I stayed in France so long that I learned how the same split which went through the German people went through them. They, too, were betrayed by their own leaders.

“I was interned in France when war began, simply because I was a German. I don't want to talk of it, for others suffered far more, but I will tell one story, so simple and so touching that for me it seems to show the beginning and the end of all human nature.

“We were very badly fed in the camp. The children suffered most, and their mouths began to get foul from lack of vitamins. One day three of us women sat with quite a group of children around us, and we sang a German song which goes, ‘Freedom which I long for, which fills all my heart, will you never appear before us, you goddess of heaven?’ After we had ended it a little girl seven or eight years old sat there looking at us with old and absolutely sincere eyes and she said, ‘But we have first to stay alive if we are to enjoy freedom.’ It is the beginning and the end of all wisdom. We all have to be able to stay alive, decently and honestly, in order to enjoy freedom and democracy.



"Well, the Germans invaded France; they came closer and closer to our camp. The Commandant had no order to release us and he hesitated for days. Yet he couldn't protect us. So he made at least a gesture, telling those who had their French papers in order to get away and 'run for their lives.'

"Well, we could run, but where? The Germans came closer and closer. 'It's all over now,' many a friend said in desperation.

"We just ran anyway and the German armies halted, at last, and the nonoccupied zone gave us a breathing spell. The simple people of France recognized us as antifascists, their allies in their fight against Hitler, and just as hunted and as defeated as they were.

"Sternberg was in America and so I came to America. Why? It is very easy to answer that—I came merely that I might live."

I said, "Now at last you have peace." But instantly I knew I had said the wrong thing.

"No," she said clearly. "The war is unfinished. You people must learn that."

"But how does a people learn?" I asked. "Do we have to learn through more war, more suffering?"

"Ah, you must learn quickly before a new war starts," Erna said. "Your education here is only in facts. Facts are fragments, unless you know how to synthesize and understand their meaning. And we all must learn that this world is one world and this mankind is one mankind regardless of race, color, and creed. It won't do to look down at other people who have no refrigerators or no cars, or are dirty. Many of the Germans have this arrogance, too, this emotional arrogance which Hitler stirred when he spoke of the 'master race' and the 'dirty underdogs.'"

I remembered a story which she had told me the night before. "You said something very striking last night," I said. "I woke up in the night and thought about it. You said you had recently been reading the private diary of a Nazi officer, I think, in which he wrote that the atomic

bomb was the ideal weapon for the fascist, and then he went on to say, 'If I had this bomb in my hand, I wonder, nevertheless, if my hand would tremble when I came to drop it.' And then you told me that what frightened you about America was that when the young American who did drop the atomic bomb—the first that had ever been dropped on a city of unknowing people—when that young man was asked how he felt when he did it, he said, 'I had no emotion whatever!' Now, why was it that the young Nazi had even a moment's wonder if his fingers might tremble when he had this bomb to drop, and why was it that the young American had no emotion?"

Erna replied, "It frightens me, but I do not know the answer. This kind of modern technical warfare where you don't see the people any longer, where you have only to push a button! Americans are proud of their advanced techniques, and rightly. But it is a terrible danger, too. I always feel that this modern technical warfare is so abstract, so inhuman. The interest, even pride, in the technical perfection seems greater than the awareness that hundreds of thousands of people can be killed by one single atomic bomb. Modern technique combined with the century-old prejudice against other people—that is the great danger in America."

A long silence fell between us.

"Have we finished our book?" I asked at last. She lifted her head and I met her grave gray eyes.

"I want to tell one story, about an American girl who comes from a small town. I like her very much. She is full of good will, she has become a social worker, and she wants to help. She is so open-minded—that is what I like about Americans, they are so open-minded, even if they don't understand. This girl's boy friend was in Germany and on the day when the armistice with Japan was declared, she came to see me and she said, 'Now it's all over!' She was happy and glad, as we all were, that the

terrible war was over. But the very next moment she said, 'Let's forget all about it as quickly as possible!'

"Then I said, 'No, let's never forget about it! Let's remember it forever. Let's learn how it happened so that it can never happen again!'

"That is what I want to say to all Americans."









